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**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP OF STATES PARTIES TO
THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ABDELOUAHAB BELLOUKI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO TO THE
OPCW AT THE EIGHTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

First, I would like to welcome back H.E. Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal of Bangladesh, as Chairperson of the Executive Council, and express our continued support to steer this session to successful conclusion.

The African Group also associates itself with the statement of the Group of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and China, which was delivered by the Group's Coordinator, H.E. Ambassador Haifa Aissami Madah, the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the OPCW.

The African Group would like to express its gratitude to the Director-General, H.E. Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, for his informative and comprehensive statement delivered in this session. We warmly salute his excellent endeavours during his successful mandate in promoting and strengthening the role of the Organisation.

By celebrating the 20th anniversary of our Organisation, the Continent's commitment to a world free of chemical weapons remains solid and strong, as reflected by the near-universal intake and absorption of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This is why the African Group welcomes and strongly supports the decision made by the Conference of the States Parties (C-21/5, dated 2 December 2016) on the continuation of the fourth phase of the Africa Programme which began on 1 January 2017 for another three-year period.

In this context, we recall that the Programme should be anchored by the regular budget so as to ensure its predictability and sustainability. We also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all the voluntary contributors, for making this Programme efficient and sustainable.

In addition, the African Group welcomes the follow-up mechanism of the Africa Programme in line with the Director-General's Note of 27 February 2017 to achieve its concrete objectives. In this regard, we appreciate the pragmatic and inclusive approach adopted by the



Director-General to enhance the Africa Programme, as mentioned in the Note of 12 September 2017 (EC86/DG.18 C-22/DG.14).

The African Group, therefore, encourages that, under the Africa Programme, the Technical Secretariat continues to deliver on its commitments, so as to enhance national capacities for the implementation of the Convention, develop tailor-made assistance and protection activities, support the establishment of designated laboratories, and the peaceful use of chemistry.

The African Group also emphasises continued support of the OPCW in the area of sensitisation, especially for decision makers at the regional organisation, the African Union, and its Regional Economic Communities through the various Technical Secretariat's special programmes.

The African Group notes and welcomes the upgrading of the OPCW Chemical Laboratory to a Centre for Chemistry and Technology as mentioned in the Note by the Technical Secretariat S/1512/2017, dated 10 July 2017. We are confident that this new initiative will play a significant role in capacity building in the area of research and training, especially for the African countries.

On the destruction of the remaining chemical weapons stockpiles, the African Group reiterates its long-standing principled position towards the achievement of complete disarmament in line with the Convention and the PMO's decisions, under strict and effective international control.

In this regard, the African Group welcomes the report by the Director-General, in the Note EC-87/DG.9, dated 24 January 2018, announcing that Libya has completed the destruction of its entire declared stockpile of chemical weapons.

We also reiterate our appreciation to the Russian Federation for the full destruction of its declared stockpile of chemical weapons, under OPCW verification.

Furthermore, the African Group welcomes the report by the Director-General, in the Note EC-87/DG.18 dated 28 February 2018, announcing that Iraq has completed the destruction of its entire declared stockpile of chemical weapons remnants.

In this regard, we encourage the international community to continue its efforts to ensure the complete chemical disarmament.

The African Group welcomes the complete destruction of all chemical weapons declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. It also notes the progress concerning the destruction of all facilities in this State Party.

We highlight the importance of the continuous dialogue between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Technical Secretariat on all pending issues, and look forward to positive outcomes of this cooperation. Furthermore, we encourage both parties to continue the implementation of the relevant Executive Council decisions.

The African Group values the merits of the OPCW being a technical Organisation, and encourages all Member States and stakeholders to work closely together towards preserving this nature.

On education and outreach, the African Group recognises the importance of the programmes in achieving the main objectives of the Convention. The Group welcomes the work done by the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach, including all regional meetings held to contribute in formulating recommendations on education and outreach. The African Group views this programme as an essential tool for enhancing and developing a culture of implementation of the Convention, through cooperation with the African Union and the African Regional Economic Communities.

We believe that after 20 years of the entry into force of the Convention, it is necessary that our concerns, especially regarding the equal implementation of the four pillars of the Convention, Articles VI, VII, X and XI, should now be carried out in an efficient manner. This should also be adequately reflected in future budgetary decisions.

On the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T), the African Group commends the work achieved by the Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Momar Diop of Senegal and the Chairperson of the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors, H.E. Ambassador María Teresa Infante of Chile, in collaboration with the Technical Secretariat, to promote global chemical security. In this regard, the African Group believes that the continued coordination between international organisations and relevant stakeholders is crucial in building awareness of chemical security and advancing global efforts to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons, in the scope of the Convention and its mandate.

In this context, the African Group welcomes the initiative of the Director-General regarding the organisation of a conference on countering chemical terrorism on 7 and 8 June 2018. The Group hopes that the outcome will be robust enough to help the States Parties to face this serious threat.

The African Group is aware that the re-emergence of chemical weapons and the threat of chemical terrorism are some of the main challenges for the Organisation. In addition to these main concerns, we are of the view that the future priorities of the OPCW should be focused on cooperation and assistance, capacity building, and promotion of the role of eco-chemistry for sustainable development.

The African Group commends the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities, under the co-chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Vusi Bruce Koloane of South Africa and H.E. Ambassador Sabine Nölke of Canada. We take note of the Working Group's document containing a set of recommendations emanating from previous discussions. We further take note of the intention of the two Co-Chairpersons to finalise this document and to hand it over to the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group of the Review Conference (OEWG-RC) for further attention.

In conclusion, the Group commends the establishment of the Open-Ended Working Group of the Review Conference (OEWG-RC) chaired by H.E. Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja, Ambassador of Indonesia. We will spare no effort in helping the Chairperson to come out with pertinent recommendations and ideas for a successful Review Conference.

I thank you for your kind attention.