



Opening Remarks by the OPCW Deputy Director-General at the 21st Annual Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention - Regional Group Meeting Africa

As delivered on 6 November 2019, The Hague, Netherlands

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Dear colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to be part of the African group meeting this morning. I join the Chairperson, Mr Moawia Osman, Head of the National Authority of Sudan, in extending a warm welcome to all delegations.

As reflected in the agenda, this meeting will focus on “The OPCW Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa”, commonly known as “the OPCW Africa Programme”. With 52 Member States, Africa represents a key part of the membership of the OPCW. Being a continent free of chemical weapons and with a developing chemical industry, Africa has specific needs and priorities in relation to the CWC, that are more focussed on development and security. The OPCW has initiated, since 2007, the Africa Programme, as a stand-alone initiative aiming at addressing the African Member States’ specific needs and priorities.

As the programme completes its 4th phase this year, a 5th phase is scheduled to cover the period from 2020 to 2022. The Secretariat would like to seize this opportunity to streamline the OPCW cooperation with the continent. It is also the Secretariat’s intention to revitalise the OPCW’s cooperation with the African Union in this context. The OPCW Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, envisages, to that end, to visit the African Union in Addis Ababa in the very near future.

Furthermore, in order to streamline the process, the Director-General designated a coordinator for the Africa Programme. The Coordinator was tasked with the design and initiation of the 5th phase of the programme, in close consultation with the African Member States and the relevant units within the Secretariat. Mr Dawsar Drissi was selected for this role. In view of his profile and experience as a former delegate from Tunisia to the OPCW and a Staff Member of the ICA Division, we are confident that he will be an asset for both the Secretariat and the African Group in streamlining the Africa Programme.

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is a matter of great satisfaction to note that the inclusive consultative process, launched by the Secretariat in early 2019, and involving African Member States' National Authorities and Permanent Representations, helped identify clear objectives and orientations for the 5th phase of the Africa programme. The excellent outcome of your deliberations on the occasion of the 17th regional meeting of African National Authorities held last June in Addis Ababa, was used as a basis for a series of further consultations with the African Permanent Representations here in The Hague.

On the basis of this comprehensive consultative process, the Technical Secretariat was able to devise a new concept for the 5th phase of the programme. The new concept was carefully crafted in a manner that meets the expectations, needs and priorities identified by the African Member States. The concept was presented to the African Permanent representations during consultations held on 18 October. A copy was also forwarded to you. In the course of today's meeting, the Secretariat will be delivering a presentation on this concept.

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Allow me to seize the opportunity of our meeting today to raise couple of other issues of interest to the African Group.

The first issue concerns the ongoing project to upgrade the OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store to a Centre for Chemistry and Technology. As you know, the Secretariat continues to make progress in this project. Once established, the Centre is expected to increase significantly the OPCW capabilities in areas of capacity building and preventing re-emergence.

Contributions and pledges totalling EUR 28.5 million have been received to date from 22 States Parties and the European Union to support the ChemTech Centre project. This EUR 33.5 million project is scheduled for completion in 2022. An additional EUR 5 million will be necessary by July 2020 in order to complete the project on time. The Centre will generate tangible benefits for all States Parties, particularly those with developing and transition economies including in Africa. I wish therefore to appeal to African Member States to politically and financially support this project with pledges that suit their respective situations. Such contributions would certainly enhance the ownership of the Centre by Africa.

The second issue I wanted to raise with the Group concerns the position of the Legal advisor within the Secretariat. As you may be aware, Mr Trevor Rajah, who was the incumbent of this position, has separated from the Organisation recently. Hailing from Zimbabwe, Mr Rajah represented Africa in an excellent fashion.

The Secretariat has already advertised the Legal Advisor position, with 16 November as the final deadline to receive applications. I would like to call on the African Member States, if

they did not do so yet, to identify suitable African candidates for this position and invite them to submit their applications.

Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge the presence of our new Director of the ICA Division, Ms Kayoko Gotoh. Ms Gotoh is available and keen to meet with the Member States and I would like to kindly invite the African delegations to take the opportunity of these NA days to establish working relations with her.

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

This concludes my remarks. Once again, I am very pleased to join you today and I wish this meeting successful deliberations and a fruitful outcome.
