

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF AFRICAN STATES PARTIES TO
THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION DELIVERED BY THE COORDINATOR OF
THE GROUP H.E. MR. FRANCIS D. KOTIA, AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA TO THE ORGANISATION FOR THE
PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS (OPCW)**

**TWENTY NINTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES
(THE HAGUE, 25-29 NOVEMBER 2024)**

**Chairperson,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States Parties ("The Africa Group/ the Group") to the Chemical Weapons Convention ("The Convention"). The Group welcomes H.E. Mr. Almir Šahović Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the OPCW. We assure him of our support in steering the deliberations of this session to a successful conclusion. We wish also to thank H.E. Mr. Suljuk Mustansar Tarar., *Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the OPCW for his successful steering of CSP 28.*

2. We also extend our appreciation to the Director-General of the OPCW, H.E. Mr. Fernando Arias, for his comprehensive statement and reiterate our confidence in his efforts to further strengthen the work of the Organisation. In addition, the Africa—Group commends the Deputy Director-General, Ambassador Odette Melono and staff of the Technical Secretariat for their invaluable role in facilitating the implementation of the Convention.

3. The Group associates itself with the statement of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Convention and China, delivered by H.E. Ms. Mirjam Blaak Sow, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uganda to the OPCW.

Chairperson,

4. The Africa Group commends the progress made since the launch of the Sixth Phase of the OPCW Programme to strengthen cooperation with Africa and acknowledges the achievements recorded under the implementation of the previous phases. We also note the 12 capacity-building activities to advance diverse objectives of the 6th Phase of the programme which have been delivered between 9 July and 8 October 2024.

5. The Group further acknowledges with satisfaction the Director General's Note EC-106/DG.9 C-29/DG.5 dated 17th June 2024 as well as the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 21st June 2024. However, to guarantee the sustainability of the programme, the Group reiterates the importance of the

programme being fully funded under the regular budget of the OPCW. The Africa Group expresses its appreciation to the States Parties and other partners that continue to make voluntary contributions to the Africa Programme for their support.

Chairperson,

6. The Africa Group reaffirms its position against the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances and reiterate its commitment to the full implementation of the CWC.

7. We note the ongoing work of the Technical Secretariat in the Syrian Arab Republic and encourage constructive dialogue and effective cooperation between both parties on all outstanding issues. In this regard, the Group welcomes the 28th round of consultations between the National Authority of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) of the OPCW in September 2024 as contained in Director-General's report EC.107/DG.20 dated 24th September 2024. We commend the Syrian Arab Republic for providing the Technical Secretariat with the necessary documentation, information and explanations that would enable the resolution of the outstanding issues.

8. The Africa Group expresses satisfaction with the EC visit to China in September 2024 and commends China and Japan for their cooperation on the ongoing work under the supervision of the Technical Secretariat to achieve destruction of the Abandoned Chemical Weapons in China, notwithstanding the challenges encountered in the process. Recognising the dangers posed by the Abandoned Chemical Weapons in the affected communities, the Group encourages Japan to consider the recommendations made by China to facilitate the processes for the recovery and destruction of the weapons. The Group therefore looks forward to the full destruction of all Japanese ACWs, including the implementation of the Action Plan agreed at EC 101 to ensure that the deadline of 2027 is met.

9. We encourage the Technical Secretariat and the international community to continue with efforts towards achieving the full universality of the Convention. We call on States not yet party to the Convention to accede to it without further delay or preconditions.

10. We recall the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and the African Union Commission on strengthening cooperation geared towards implementation of the Convention. We are encouraged by the efforts of the Technical Secretariat in pursuing a number of different avenues to give efficacy to the MOU and aid the implementation of the specific actions stipulated in the MOU. The Africa Group calls for continued efforts by the two organisations in championing the Memorandum of Understanding.

11. The Group notes the continued effort of the Technical Secretariat in initiating tailor-made programmes- focusing on the needs and aspirations of States Parties, including enhancing capacities of chemical laboratories and centres of excellence in Africa. An important milestone was reached in 2024 with the establishment of an OPCW-designated laboratory in Algeria, National Institute of Criminalistics and Criminology of the Gendarmerie Nationale (NICC/GN). The Group considers the success attained as a step in the right direction for the African region and hence looks forward to more designated laboratories in Africa. We recognise the support of the Technical Secretariat and other collaborating partners to this endeavour which will contribute to the expansion of the OPCW-designated laboratories network to all regions in strengthening States Parties' capabilities to implement the CWC in responding to any use or threat of use of Chemical Weapons.

12. The Group is convinced that adopting a targeted impact assessment programme, implementing a results-based approach and embedding the Africa Programme in the annual workplan of the International Cooperation and Assistance Division (ICA), will significantly contribute to the continued accomplishments of the Sixth Phase of this Programme. In this connection, the Africa Group commends ongoing capacity building programmes under the current phase of the Africa Programme and calls for the Technical Secretariat's support for training in the areas of laboratory skills development and chemical safety and security.

13. The Africa Group commends the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T) chaired by H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Philemon Madonsela of the Republic of South Africa. We look forward to the continuous facilitation of discussions with a view to promoting global chemical security in light of Council decision EC-86/DEC.9. In this connection, the Africa Group strongly believes that the constant coordination between international organisations and relevant stakeholders is crucial in building awareness on chemical security and advancing global efforts to prevent chemical terrorism as well as the re-emergence of chemical weapons, within the scope of the Convention and the Organisation's mandate.

14. Cognisant of the threats of the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons and chemical terrorism as some of the main challenges for the Organisation, the Africa Group wishes to advocate that the OPCW should continue to focus on cooperation and assistance, capacity-building and promotion of the peaceful use of chemistry. Wherefore, we recommend robust engagement with chemical industry associations in support of the use of chemistry for peaceful purposes, safety and security, sustainable methods that use non-toxic chemicals for sustainable development. We believe that a balanced approach between the verification requirement and ongoing capacity-building, technology transfer and technical assistance are essential ingredients to the realisation of the objectives of the Convention. This will

guarantee notable progress in contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

15. The Africa Group takes note of the DG's note (S/2289/2024 dated 23rd May 2024) on Artificial Intelligence (AI) recognising the potential link between AI and chemical threats and its growing importance on the international disarmament agenda. The Group therefore, welcomes the successful First Global Conference on The Role of Artificial Intelligence in advancing the implementation of the CWC that was jointly organised by the Kingdom of Morocco and the Technical Secretariat in Rabat from 22-24 October 2024. The outcome of the conference should significantly enhance the effort of the OPCW to prevent the use of Chemical Weapons, and promote peaceful use of chemistry for the good of all.

16. The African Group believes that the time is ripe for the OPCW to consider a strategy on the use of Emerging Technologies especially Artificial Intelligence, in the work of the OPCW to deepen internal capabilities of the organisation, noting that the UN adopted the first global artificial intelligence resolution in March 2024 on the promotion of "safe, secure and trustworthy" artificial intelligence (AI) systems that will also benefit sustainable development for all.

Chairperson,

17. The Africa Group welcomes efforts by the Director-General at achieving gender balance and equitable geographical representation in the Staff establishment in the Technical Secretariat at the top management levels of the Organisation. However, constructive and corrective measures should be taken to address the underrepresentation of the Africa Group in the Technical Secretariat at all levels including top-level management of the Organisation. To this end, the Group calls for greater transparency in the processes of recruitment and selection of personnel to the Secretariat and looks forward to the Secretariat's report on the status of and timelines for the implementation of the Action Plan on Geographical Representation as decided by CSP-28.

18. The Group will continue to follow the effective implementation of the decision taken at the CSP 28 on Tenure Policy and urges the Technical Secretariat to report thereon as directed by the Conference.

19. Furthermore, the Africa Group wishes to encourage the implementation of knowledge management processes at the organisation. This would afford the Organisation the broad benefits of a diverse and skilled workforce, consistent with Article VIII, Paragraph 44 of the Convention.

20. The Africa Group commends the progress made in addressing the matter of transfer of funds out of the International Cooperation and Assistance (ICA) Programmes. We note with satisfaction the inclusion of the Africa Group's proposal in the decision on Biennial Programme and Budget of the OPCW

(2024-2025) adopted by the CSP-28, which, amongst others, notes with concern that in past years there have been several transfers of unutilised funds out of the ICA.

21. We reiterate our call on the Technical Secretariat and States Parties to work collectively with a view to achieving the full and effective implementation of the ICA programmes. In this regard, the Africa Group strongly urges that the relevant budgetary requirements and programmes of the Organisation are effectively and promptly executed. This will avert the need for transfers between major programmes, including consideration of the retention of unspent funds for ICA in a special fund.

22. The Africa Group, while restating its principled position on the balanced implementation of all Articles of the Convention, remains convinced that the measures put in place for the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI are of paramount importance for the reinforcement of capacity building of all States Parties. As recommended by the EC decision C-16/DEC.10 dated 1st December, 2011, we welcome the efforts made by the Technical Secretariat, notably, on the new initiatives on the three focus areas of integrated chemicals management, enhancement of laboratory capabilities, and chemical knowledge promotion and exchange. We encourage the adoption of concrete measures that enable the implementation of the output of the Drafting Committee on Article XI.

Mr. Chairperson,

23. The Africa Group underscores the merits of consensus building as a means to adopting core decisions that are relevant to the objectives of the Convention. Consensus enables States Parties to avoid controversies that beset decision-making processes in ensuring the effective implementation of the mandate of the OPCW. The Group encourages all States Parties to preserve the technical nature of the Organisation and work in close collaboration with stakeholders towards the full implementation of the Convention. The Group believes that this will contribute to international peace and security.

24. The Africa Group notes with concern that the current practice in the voting procedures applied for the election of the members of the Executive Council does not comply with Rule 85 of the Rules of procedure of the CSP arising from the wrong interpretation of Rule 85 of the Rules of Procedure of the CSP. This is inconsistent with States Parties' sovereign right to free choice. The practice, which usually results in a ballot with less than the maximum number of votes cast being declared as invalid is irregular and contravenes the letter and spirit of Art. VIII, paragraphs 17 and 18 of the CWC and is inconsistent with Rules 69, 79, 80, 81, and 85 of the Rules of Procedure of the CSP.

25. It needs to be emphasised that since the CWC and the CSP Rules of Procedure provide the legal framework for the conduct of all elections and

proceedings in the Conference, the Convention and Rules of Procedure of the CSP being the supreme law, an electoral practice or process which is conventionally and procedurally irregular ought to be discontinued.

26. Given the foregoing, the Africa Group calls upon States Parties to adopt the recommendations of the Group's Non-Paper on the Irregular Voting Procedure at the Organisation for a review of the practice and expresses its keenness to work with other States Parties towards finding common ground to ensure that States Parties can freely exercise their sovereign rights of choice without any undue procedural impositions or limitations.

27. The Africa Group would like to request that this statement should be published on the public website of the OPCW and the catalyst as an official document of this session.

28. I thank you for your kind attention.