

**STATEMENT OF ZIMBABWE DELIVERED BY RETIRED
COLONEL TSHINGA DUBE, CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL
AUTHORITY OF ZIMBABWE ON THE ORGANIZATION FOR
THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS (OPCW)**

Mr. Chairperson

Mr. Director General

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

I have the honour and privilege to address the Seventeenth Session of the Conference of States Parties and let me at the outset, congratulate you Ambassador Peter Goosen on your appointment as the Chairperson of the Seventeenth Session of the CSP. I do so with the strong conviction that you will be able to effectively and successfully guide our deliberations given your vast experience and diplomatic expertise. I assure you the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

In the same vein, I wish to pay tribute to Ambassador Paul Arkwright, Ambassador of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the out-going Chairperson for the most efficient manner in which he steered the Conference in the past year.

Mr. Chairperson,

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by H.E.

Mr. Sirajuddin H. Yousif, Ambassador of Sudan on behalf of the Africa Group as well as the statement of the Non-Aligned Movement and China delivered by H.E. M. M. Akhondzadeh, the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

I would also like to express my country's great appreciation for the opening statement by Ambassador Ahmet Uzumcu, the Director General of the OPCW, which gave a comprehensive overview of the activities of the Organization. It also evidently reflected his outstanding stewardship of the OPCW.

Mr. Chairperson,

As we celebrated the fifteenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we reminded ourselves of the importance and imperative to rid the world of all chemical weapons by ensuring the destruction of all existing stockpiles of such weapons and preventing their re-emergence. Zimbabwe shares this vision and takes this opportunity to assure the OPCW of its unwavering and continued support in the efforts to destroy the heinous weapons and agents of death and destruction.

The CWC is a disarmament treaty, the first and only treaty designed to eliminate the entire category of weapons of mass destruction under a stringent regime of inspections and verification. It is paramount that we seek to strengthen international and regional efforts and mechanisms to prevent the existence and re-emergence of weapons of mass destruction including chemical weapons.

Mr. Chairperson, the people of Zimbabwe suffered first-hand the atrocities and cruelty inflicted by chemical weapons during the war of liberation against settler colonialism when Rhodesian forces used the heinous weapons against our liberation forces and civilians. It was with this painful experience that we were among the first to sign the Convention and deposit the instruments on 25 April 1997. In compliance with the provisions of the CWC, we have domesticated the Convention and enacted the Chemical Weapons (Prohibition) Act and established a robust and multi-sectoral National Authority to oversee the implementation of the Convention.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the light of the forthcoming Third Review Conference next spring, Zimbabwe notes substantive preparatory work of the Executive Council, the States Parties and the Technical Secretariat over the past year. It would be remiss on my part not to commend the assiduous work of Her Excellency Nassima Bagli, Ambassador of Algeria and Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Third Review Conference. We assure her of my country's relentless support.

In conclusion, my delegation stands ready to work with all delegations in a constructive manner with a view to ensure that this Seventeenth Session of the Conference is a success

While thanking you, Mr. Chairperson, I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Seventeenth Session of the Conference of States Parties.

Thank you.