OPEN ENDED WORKING GROUP ON TERRORISM: ORGANIZATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS (OPCW)

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PRESENTATION DELIVERED
BY
DR. TAREK SHARIF
HEAD, DEFENSE AND SECURITY DIVISION
PEACE AND SECURITY DEPARTMENT
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION
H.E Vusi Bruce Koloane, Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa to the OPCW;
H.E Ambassador Ahmed Uzumcu, Director General OPCW
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honored to deliver this presentation to you today, on behalf of the African Union (AU) Commission, at this meeting of the Open Ended Working Group on Terrorism of the OPCW.

Let me start by thanking the OPCW for inviting the African Union Commission to be part of this very important meeting, which comes at a time when global peace is increasingly threatened by mushrooming terrorist groups.

The presentation will highlight the following issues:

- the importance of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) to the efforts to prevent chemical terrorism;
- the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the OPCW and the AUC as a framework of cooperation between the two bodies, and key activities jointly undertaken to enhance the efforts and capacities of AU Member States to meet their obligations under the CWC;
- the AU counter-terrorism policy framework and the UN Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1540 of 2004, as instruments to assist Member States’ efforts to deny non-State actors access to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs);
- challenges faced in countering terrorism potentially involving WMDs in Africa and the steps being taken; and finally
• proposed areas to strengthen support to the Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RMs) in the prevention of chemical terrorism.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

On the importance of the CWC in the efforts to prevent chemical terrorism, it is noted that the OPCW continues to play an important role in bringing together countries and other stakeholders to exchange views on various aspects of the implementation of the CWC, and the Open Ended Working Group on Terrorism is a critical forum for sharing information on the contribution of the CWC to denying terrorists access to prohibited and restricted chemical agents.

The possibility that terrorists may carry out attacks using chemical agents, be they in form of poisonous gases, liquids or solids that have toxic effects on people, animals or plants, remains a legitimate global security concern. This is more so because chemical weapons have been the most widely used and widely proliferated WMD compared to nuclear and biological weapons, and terrorism brings in a new dimension to the threat of proliferation of chemical weapons. Denying access of nuclear, chemical, and biological agents and technologies to unauthorized non-state actors is, therefore, valid and the effective implementation of the CWC, as a multinational agreement meant to control international proliferation of chemical weapons and their precursors, should be seen in this light.
Whereas it is appreciated that various chemical agents are used for industrial purposes in the manufacture of various products for the good of humanity, their misuse has the potential to pose a serious threat to human and animal lives, and the environment. It is in this regard that the control of precursor chemicals is essential, in order for them not to fall into the hands of unauthorized non-state actors. Indeed, high-threat chemical agents and some toxic industrial chemicals may be used by unauthorized non-state actors as either weaponized or crude chemical weapons if not properly secured, especially because of the suicidal nature of terrorist attacks.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Allow me to highlight what the AU is doing, in partnership with the OPCW, in support of the Member States to prevent the likelihood of chemical terrorism on the continent.

The African Union strongly supports sustained action to fulfill the core objectives of the CWC and to address all matters relating to its universality. Within the framework of the MOU signed with the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW in 2006, the African Union has continued to work closely with the OPCW to promote the goals of the CWC through a tailor-made approach targeted to meet specific national contexts, within the framework of the decision on the implementation and universality of the Convention, adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity at its 38th Ordinary Session held in 2002.
Within the framework of the MOU, the OPCW was provided with an opportunity to address the 5th meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defense, Safety and Security (STCDSS) that was held in Addis Ababa in October 2011. The STCDSS is the ministerial technical body of the AU on matters of Defense, Safety and Security.

The AU and the OPCW also partnered in convening, at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, in March 2012, the Tenth Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties to the CWC in Africa. The meeting enabled exchange of views on the potential role of the African RECs in contributing to the full and effective implementation of the CWC in Africa.

This subsequently led to the designation of Focal Points by the RECs and RMs with the role of undertaking consultations with the AU, OPCW and States Parties in their sub-regions to discuss possible areas of intervention and support; coordinating regional action – including in the review of national legislation, support the establishment or designation of National Authorities in those countries that do not have, assist in reporting, as well as coordinate the sharing of expertise and capacities among States Parties and pooling of resources. It is noted that the program between the OPCW and the East African Community (EAC) is developed in this context. I also wish to thank the UK for supporting this initiative.

The AU and the OPCW also held, in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, in 2013, the 11th Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in Africa.
On the other hand, the AU Commission, the OPCW and the US National Authority (NA) and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) of the US Department of Defense, co-organized seminars on WMD, non-proliferation and the implementation of the CWC in Africa, in April 2013 and March 2015, in Pretoria, South Africa.

A workshop on the development and assessment of the regional plans of action on the implementation of the CWC was also held at the AU Headquarters, in November 2014. The workshop enabled review of the proposals from the RECs and a matrix developed for the further consideration of the OPCW.

The AU Commission has continued to engage with the OPCW in various statutory forums, including the AU Summit, Conferences of States Parties to the CWC, Review Conferences of the CWC, Annual Meetings of the National Authorities and the Annual Meeting of National Authorities in Africa.

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

On the AU counter-terrorism policy framework and UNSCR 1540, it is noted that the African continent is affected by new and emerging security threats, and especially international terrorism. It is in response to this that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in 1999. This convention provides the legal framework for preventing and combating terrorism in the African continent. The Protocol to the Convention, adopted in 2004, further stresses the growing risk of linkages between terrorism and WMD, trafficking, transnational organized crimes and money laundering. It obligates States Parties to strengthen national and regional measures in conformity with relevant
continental and international Conventions and Treaties, to prevent the perpetrators of terrorist acts from acquiring WMDs; and to cooperate with the international community in the implementation of continental and international instruments relating to disarmament and non-proliferation.

The AU also developed the African Model Law on Terrorism as a guide and for reference by member states in the development and updating of their legal instruments in the prevention and combating of terrorism. Member States are already using the Model Law to update their laws.

Within this normative framework, the Commission has taken steps towards the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Africa. The resolution imposes binding obligations on all States to refrain from providing any form of support to non-State actors, including terrorist groups, that attempt to develop, acquire, manufacture, possess, develop, transport, transfer or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery, and to adopt and enforce appropriate effective laws in this respect.

As part of the series of forums that the AU Commission provides to AU Member States to exchange views and experiences in the implementation of the UNSCR 1540, the AU Commission, with the support of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, will hold an Assistance and Review Conference on UNSCR 1540 from 7 to 9 April 2016. The meeting will bring together AU Member States and assistance provides for purposes of informing on assistance requested and matching with the available assistance on offer.
Terrorist groups are becoming increasingly bold in their activities and attacks, and as terrorism continues to become increasingly complex, with boundaries between political, religious and ideological extremism and crime increasingly getting blurred with terrorist groups increasingly operating as a network, the need for responses that are not fragmented, but rather with enhanced joint action at regional and international levels, are of necessity. The transnational nature of the terrorist threat calls for strengthened sharing of information, intelligence and knowledge to prevent, counter and respond to WMD terrorist attacks.

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

On challenges faced, the African experience in the field of countering terrorism potentially involving WMDs, especially chemical weapons, remains weak due to various factors like competing national development priorities, resource limitations, weak political support, weak laws, limited technical capacities and poor coordination. It is in this regard that the AU Commission continues to work with the OPCW, CTBTO, IAEA, the 1540 Committee and the various United Nations agencies with counter-terrorism mandate, to support the AU Member States to prevent WMDs and the technologies to produce them, from falling into the hands of terrorists.

The AU Commission will continue to strengthen cooperation with the OPCW towards enhancing the capacities of AU Member States to prevent, counter and respond to chemical terrorism.

Some of the areas in which such enhanced support should be provided include:

1. development and review of national legislation as part of the domestication of the CWC;
ii. development and acquisition of requisite technologies for protection, detection and monitoring of chemical releases and radioactivity in public transportation or urban spaces;

iii. build and strengthen technical capacities to enhance state preparedness to respond to a chemical terrorism attack;

iv. improved storage and security for chemical agents and radioactive material meant for peaceful uses;

v. strengthen mobilization of financial resources to support Member States to meet their obligations under the CWC to reduce their vulnerability to chemical terrorism;

vi. Support the National Authorities to develop action plans that will guide national coordination in the implementation of the CWC;

vii. Support the strengthening of existing competences on the African continent so that they can be shared, while developing further technical competencies;

viii. enhanced efforts to strengthen cooperation with the RECs.

In conclusion, let me state that the AU Commission is committed to continued cooperation with the OPCW to enhance the capacities of Member States to prevent chemical terrorism, and to address the threat that terrorists and other unauthorized non-State actors may carry out a chemical attack.

I wish to, once again, thank the OPCW for this opportunity and look forward to continued cooperation between the AU Commission and the OPCW.

Thank you for your attention.