PRESS RELEASE

The 10th Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention in Africa kicks off today

Addis Ababa, 22 May 2012: This morning the Tenth Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in Africa kicked off at the new African Union Conference Complex, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The three day meeting, jointly organized by the African Union (AU) and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), is an annual event that provides an opportunity for the National Authorities, established by States Parties to ensure the full and effective implementation of the CWC, to confer, network and share experiences as well as consult with the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW on how best they can fulfill their obligations and receive the required assistance in this regard.

The opening ceremony featured an array of speakers, including Mr El Ghassim Wane, AU Director for Peace and Security, Mr Lesie Gumbi, Director of the OPCW International Cooperation & Assistance Division, Mr Mark Albon, Head of the OPCW Implementation Support Branch and Brigadier General Dr Charles Norbert Muzanila, Director at the Ministry of Defence and National Service of Tanzania & Chairperson of the Tanzanian National Authority. The meeting was officially opened by Honourable Tadesse Haile, State Minister for Industry and Chairman of the National Authority of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, who also delivered the keynote speech.

Sessions over the course of the coming days will cover a number of topics including the effective running of National Authorities, national implementing legislation and regulation, and available support from the OPCW, including web-based tools and other e-based support. Moreover, the meeting will discuss the role the African Union and the regional Economic Communities (RECs) can play for the full implementation of the CWC in Africa.

The CWC entered into force in 1997 and currently has one hundred and eighty eight (188) States Parties globally, out of which forty-nine (49) are AU Member States. AU Member States are thus asserting their role as active and vital players in the global nonproliferation efforts and full partners in advancing global security.