

***About the meeting:***

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) aims to eliminate an entire category of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) by prohibiting the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer or use of chemical weapons by States Parties. The CWC entered into force in 1997 and currently has one hundred and eighty eight (188) States Parties out of which fifty (50) are from Africa.

Under the CWC, States Parties are required to adopt, in accordance with their constitutional processes, the necessary measures to implement their obligations under the CWC. In particular, they are required to: (i) prohibit natural and legal persons anywhere on its territory or in any other place under its jurisdiction from undertaking any activity prohibited under the CWC, including enacting penal legislation with respect to such activity; (ii) not permit in any place under its control any activity prohibited under the CWC; and (iii) extend its penal legislation to any activity prohibited under the CWC undertaken anywhere by natural persons, possessing its nationality. In order to fulfill these obligations, States Parties are required to designate or establish a National Authority to serve as the national focal point for effective liaison with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

At its 38<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session, held in Durban in 2002, the Assembly of the Organization of African Unity, adopted decision [AHG/DEC.182(XXXVIII)] in which it expressed its commitment to the global chemical weapons disarmament and non-proliferation efforts and encouraged the call to achieve universality of the CWC in Africa and its effective implementation. To this effect, the AU Commission signed, in 2006, a MoU with the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, which provides a framework for close cooperation and joint action in advancing the goals and objectives of the CWC in Africa.

The Regional Meeting for National Authorities is one of the key activities undertaken each year in support of the work of National Authorities in Africa. Realizing the complementarity of advantages of the two organizations; the technical expertise and global mandate of the OPCW and the political weight of the African Union, it was agreed to hold the Tenth Regional Meeting of National Authorities under the auspices of the two institutions in order to increase awareness of the CWC and the benefits of its membership; significantly enhancing cooperation and also achieving the widest possible adherence to CWC in Africa.

The Tenth Regional Meeting, which will be held under the theme "***Full Implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in Africa: The Role of Regional and Sub-Regional Institutions***", will serve as a forum for States Parties in the region to present their needs for assistance in relation to their pending obligations and indicate what assistance they could in turn also offer to other States Parties in the region. It will also serve to determine what role the African Union and the regional Economic Communities (RECs) can play for the full implementation of the CWC in Africa. The meeting will further provide opportunities for participants to confer, network and share experiences with each other on how national obligations may be fulfilled.