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PRESS RELEASE

THE CHAIRPERSON CONGRATULATES THE OPCW AND LIBYA ON THE SUCCESSFUL REMOVAL OF REMAINING CHEMICAL WEAPON PRECURSORS

***Addis Ababa, 6 September 2016*:** the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, expressed her deep satisfaction following the announcement made by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), confirming the successful removal of precursors chemicals from Libya, on 27 August 2016, as part of an ongoing operation undertaken in close collaboration with the national authorities, to verifiably eliminate remaining chemical weapons stocks, in line with Libya's obligations pursuant to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The Chairperson of the Commission expressed her relief at the timely removal of the precursor chemicals, particularly in light of the current situation in the country and the risk that such material could fall into the hands of non-state actors and terrorist groups.

The Chairperson strongly commends the efforts of OPCW and the commitment of the Libyan authorities in achieving this milestone. She also expressed thanks and appreciation to the members of the international community that have provided technical expertise, operational support and financial resources towards this end. She underscored that this milestone demonstrates how the international community, through a strong partnership and a sense of collective responsibility, can work collaboratively and constructively in countering the risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. She thus seized the opportunity to call on remaining States non-party to the Chemical Weapons Convention to joint it without delay as a key step towards achieving a world free of weapons of mass destruction.

It is to be recalled that the 38th Ordinary Session of the Organization of African Unity, held in Durban in 2002, adopted decision AHG/DEC.182(XXXVIII) in which it expressed its commitment to, and called for the universality of, the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Commission of the AU and the OPCW subsequently signed a memorandum of understanding in 2006 and have been working jointly towards achieving the universality and full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention in Africa.