
Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

13 December 2023

English only

2023 Meeting
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United States National Statement

Submitted by the United States of the America

Mr. Chair:

It has been a year since the Ninth Review Conference turned the page on the past by establishing a Working Group for Strengthening Implementation of the Convention. This Working Group is a new beginning and an important opportunity to strengthen and institutionalize the Convention. In his message to the Review Conference, UN Secretary-General Guterres laid out the challenge before us in stark and compelling terms. He cautioned:

“Biological weapons are not the product of science fiction. They are a clear and present danger. That’s why strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention is more important than ever.”

We must heed the call of the Secretary-General. Together States Parties must seize this moment and work to deliver on the promise of the Ninth Review Conference.

Under the highly capable and dedicated leadership of the Chair, Ambassador Flavio Damico, the Working Group is off to a solid start in its first year. Six of the seven subject areas tasked by the Review Conference have already been considered and extensive discussions are continuing regarding the development of respective mechanisms for international cooperation and assistance as well as scientific and technological review.

At the Review Conference, the United States strongly supported the establishment of the intersessional Working Group and its mandate to identify and recommend measures to strengthen and institutionalize the Convention. Reaching consensus within the Working Group on a framework of such measures would provide a substantive basis for consideration by States Parties of any further action, including the possible negotiation of a supplementary agreement.

As evidence of our continuing commitment, last week the United States submitted a national working paper to the Working Group outlining our overall approach to strengthening the Convention, including verification and compliance.

We are committed, as a matter of urgency, to achieving the promise of the Ninth Review Conference. The Review Conference directed the Working Group “to complete its work as soon as possible, preferably before the end of 2025.”

The year 2025 will be the 100th anniversary of the signing of the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the 50th anniversary of the entry-into-force of the Biological Weapons Convention. These impending anniversaries are a reminder of our solemn responsibility as States Parties to work towards a world free of biological weapons.

The United States is committed to finalizing a report of the Working Group by the end of 2025 which sets out recommendations on measures to support a way forward to



strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention and the international norm against the possession and use of biological weapons.

We are further committed to working with interested States Parties to establish a mechanism by 2025 for enhancing cooperation and assistance as well as a mechanism for scientific and technological review.

Our efforts in the coming year will be critical to the success of the Working Group. To maintain the necessary momentum, we must build a bridge of informal consultations between now and the next Working Group meeting in August. Ultimately, success will require that States Parties set their politics aside and embrace our shared interests and common humanity in addressing the threat of state and non-state development, possession, and use of biological weapons – a threat which respects no borders.

Mr. Chair,

The United States would like to raise one other issue. We note the documents submitted by the Russian Federation.

During the Article V Formal Consultative Meeting, the United States, jointly with Ukraine, fully addressed the unfounded concerns raised by the Russian Federation. However, it was clear from the outset of the Article V process that Russia never intended to engage constructively with Ukraine and the United States. It came to our attention on the very first day of the meeting that the Russian delegation had already made up its mind and circulated a draft of a proposed “joint statement” to select delegations regarding the outcome of this Article V Consultation. In this draft joint statement, the Russian Federation explicitly concluded that Ukraine and the United States had failed to answer questions regarding the activities of biological laboratories in Ukraine – a conclusion it reached before the United States and Ukraine even began our joint presentation.

Clearly, Moscow was not interested in hearing our responses, not interested in working in good faith with us. This was the most striking example, but it was only one of several actions through which the Russian Federation clearly signaled its lack of sincerity.

Russia then unsuccessfully escalated its false claims to the UN Security Council, requesting an investigation pursuant to Article VI of the BWC. Russia garnered only two of the nine votes required for adoption of its draft resolution – one of which was its own vote.

We consider this consultation process with Russia to be completed and closed, and we do not intend to engage any further on this matter.

In this regard, the Russian Federation has submitted working papers and other documents related to these false allegations as official documents. In no way should the participation of the United States in this Meeting of States Parties or our consent to the MSP final report be construed or understood to be an acknowledgement or approval of such documents or the falsehoods they contain.

Thank you.
