Mr President,

Sweden is fully aligned with the statement delivered by the European Union. I would like to make a few additional comments in a national capacity.

First of all, let me thank you, Ambassador Bencini, for assuming the presidency of the Ninth Review Conference, and assure you of the full support of my delegation for your efforts towards a successful outcome.

Mr President,

The international norm against biological weapons, codified by the Biological Weapons Convention, is indispensable for our collective global security. The agreement on the Convention over 50 years ago was a landmark achievement, and it has now gathered 184 States Parties.

This Review Conference is a critical opportunity for us to take stock of the implementation of the Convention and to set out the strategic course for the years to come. Together we need to ensure that the Convention upholds its central role in preventing the misuse of biology for hostile purposes.

Mr President,

On 24 February of this year, the international security environment deteriorated dramatically. Sweden reiterates in the strongest terms its condemnation of the Russian Federation’s illegal aggression against Ukraine. We reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.
Furthermore, we strongly reject the groundless accusations the Russian Federation have directed against Ukraine on having a US-funded biological weapons program. These false allegations not only distract from and undermine legitimate international cooperation to combat infectious diseases, but also undermine the Convention itself. This shows a lack of respect for the treaty obligations Russia has once committed to uphold. We trust that after the formal Article V consultations here in Geneva and a clear vote of no confidence for Russian claims in the UN Security Council earlier this month, we can consider this issue concluded.

Mr President,

Advances in science and technology hold great promise for controlling and curing some of the most dangerous diseases - but also increases proliferation risks and the risk that knowledge is exploited to develop new types of biological threats. An important element of the intersessional work has been discussions relating to the scientific and technological developments with relevance for the Convention. Several proposals have been presented over the years on how to make the process of review more systematic. This Conference should seize the opportunity to reach a principal agreement on the establishment of an S&T review mechanism, allowing for follow-up discussion to work out the details of its precise form and working methods.

Sweden shares the objective of the majority of States Parties to reach agreement on a substantive and forward-looking program for the intersessional period, building on the previous, but with a new approach. Sweden is one of a large number of States Parties co-sponsoring a proposal to establish a Temporary Experts Working Group to enable in-depth discussions on concrete measures to strengthen the Convention. We believe such a group, open to experts from all States Parties and focused on essential topics, will enable us to make needed progress in areas characterized by long-running stalemate.

Sweden looks forward to engaging with other States Parties over the coming weeks on an S&T mechanism and a Temporary Experts Working Group contributing to a successful outcome of this Conference.

Mr President,

The Secretary General’s Mechanism, established by the General Assembly and endorsed by the Security Council, is indispensable for the international community’s ability to deal with allegations of use of biological and chemical weapons. Sweden is a long-standing supporter of the mechanism and welcomes all the work that is done in order to ensure its continued operational readiness.

Between 2018 and 2022, Sweden, together with international partners, co-organised five laboratory data analysis exercises. Together with UNODA, Sweden also arranged a team leader training course for nominated experts in 2019. Furthermore, Sweden has
contributed to scenario building and evaluation planning for the UNSGM field exercise (Capstone), held this autumn, as well as for a prelude virtual table-top exercise in 2020. Sweden continues to nominate experts and laboratories available to the UNSGM.

The independence of the mechanism remains crucial, and we must remain vigilant to all attempts to undermine it.

Mr President,

It is Sweden’s firm conviction that a gender equality perspective on all aspects of our collective work will strengthen international peace and security. Sweden encourages all state parties to adopt a gender perspective in the context of the BTWC and on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation in general.

Let me conclude by welcoming the States Parties that have joined the BWC community since the last Review Conference, and by calling on all those that have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention. I would also like to urge all States Parties to implement the provisions of the Biological Weapons Convention, UN Security Council resolution 1540 and other international instruments of relevance to our common endeavour to ensure that biological weapons are never used.

I thank you Mr. President.