



**INTERVENTION BY THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
DURING THE THIRD SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE
STRENGTHENING OF THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION (BWC)
GENEVA, 4 TO 8 DECEMBER 2023**

TOPIC: COMPLIANCE AND VERIFICATION

5 December 2023

Chairperson, distinguished delegates,

South Africa extends its appreciation to the Chair of the Working Group and welcomes the discussion on this topic as it is the first within the BWC Framework in twenty years. My delegation aligns this intervention with that of the African Group, delivered by the distinguished delegation of Nigeria.

Chairperson, we recognise the valuable exchanges and presentations conducted during the panel session this morning. These discussions have strengthened the argument of the need for measures to evaluate progress on the steps taken, and to ensure that States Parties to the BWC are indeed on track to meet their respective obligations.

To that end, compliance and verification mechanisms are important tools to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Convention and achieving its aims. In this regard, we acknowledge the delegations of Mexico and the Netherlands as the Friends of the Chair, and hope that they are empowered and supported to make progress in this critical area, and to advance work around compliance and verification.

Mr Chairperson,

Compliance and verification tools are paramount to determine accuracy, progress and to remedy possible problems that may arise in actions taken by States Parties in their endeavours to implement the provisions of the Convention. These tools enable not just technical adherence but also reflects good faith by States Parties.

Furthermore, it enables the effective, efficient, and economical utilisation of limited resources. It enables transparency and openness and fosters cordial relations among States and serves to advance the

sharing of good practices. It also contributes to capacity-building and skills development and promotes universalisation of the Convention.

The exponential growth and developments in biotechnology necessitate renewed attention to the subject of verification and compliance mechanisms, which should advance the peaceful use of biotechnology, while simultaneously preventing its use in biological weapons, be it by State or non-State actors. This further heightens the call for the urgent development of compliance and verification mechanisms to prevent any misuse of biotechnology.

The deteriorating state of the planet and its people due to natural occurrences are compounded by man-made destructive instruments and actions, which underline the need for mechanisms which are legally-binding in nature. Two decades have been lost and we cannot afford to lose any more time, especially considering the complex geopolitical environment and rising tensions.

Collaboration with experts in the scientific and technological industry remains vital to identify twenty-first century biological developments and advancements and their potential use for biological weapons purposes. Engagements with civil society organisations and relevant stakeholders are likewise important for States to gain a better understanding and appreciation of all possible scenarios for the harmful use of biotechnology.

Institutionalising global governance mechanisms and adherence to international law encompasses compliance and verification for all, and not just for some.

Mr Chairperson,

My delegation appeals to all delegations to exercise flexibility in order to secure progress towards the strengthening of the Convention, including the development of appropriate and effective compliance and verification mechanisms. We further take this opportunity to assure you of South Africa's commitment and support to the realisation of the full implementation of the Convention and avail ourselves to engage constructively in the ensuing intersessional period.

I thank you.