



***Special Representation of Brazil
to the Conference on Disarmament***

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**Biological Weapons Convention
IX Review Conference (Geneva, 28/11-16/12/2022)
General Debate**

BRAZIL'S STATEMENT

Thank you, Mr. President,

I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Ambassador Leonardo Bencini, on your appointment as President of the Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention. We count on your leadership to bring us to a safe port. Under your guidance, and with your creativity and perseverance, success in this Review Conference will not elude us. Rest assured of my delegation's full support.

Mr. President,

This IX Review Conference is taking place against a very complex backdrop that place risks to the future of the BWC, a regime inaugurated 50 years ago with the opening for signing of the Convention.

Firstly, geopolitics is back to the forefront of the political agenda. Lack of trust and political will and a deteriorating international security scenario are an integral part of the difficulties confronting multiple disarmament regimes. Designed to provide guardrails and to guide States' behaviors, such regimes are strained and the disarmament machinery sends indications that it is faltering.

Secondly, the challenges of the early 21st century increase in number, intensity, and complexity to the point that the boundary between biosecurity and biosafety is being steadily eroded.

To compound matters, scientific and technological developments in the field of Life Sciences

are unfolding at breakneck speed. They can lead, on the one hand, to astonishing feats like the development of vaccines in record time. On the other, these breakthroughs have evident dual-use dimensions. A particularly worrying development is the growing popularization and declining costs of certain techniques in the area of microbiology and genetic manipulation. In the wrong hands, their enormous potential is cause for concern.

No country is immune from the consequences of new natural and manipulated pathogens, possible serious accidents, and criminal uses, especially bioterrorism. The COVID-19 pandemic brought lessons that are still fresh on our memories. Biological risks, which, unlike the nuclear and chemical areas, far transcend the institutional controls in place. Indeed, of all the regimes regulating weapons of mass destruction, the BWC is the least developed.

In brief, the current situation is more serious than in 2016, when we did not reach a final substantive document, and considerably more serious than in 2001, when disagreements over a verification protocol made it impossible to reach a consensus outcome.

Mr. President,

A well-known adage about arms control treaties is that we have not only to trust but also to verify the compliance to them. Confidence building measures are an essential building block for a meaningful verification mechanism. In the absence of a verification protocol, voluntary transparency measures, CBMs, are the only transparency mechanisms officially recognized by the Convention.

Nevertheless, we are forced to acknowledge that governments lack knowledge of what countless laboratories are working out on in their own territories. International standards are not sufficiently developed and, domestically, more information is needed to better prepare what is to be shared with other State parties.

The establishment of a verification mechanism in the BWC has been challenging consecutive generations of diplomats. A charged topic with a long history prompts the IX RevCon to think outside the box, having in mind that previous experiences in other disarmament regimes, such as the ones in the AIEA and in the OPCW, are hardly replicable within the BWC.

Mr. President,

Brazil favors a balanced implementation of the BWC pillars, non-proliferation and cooperation for peaceful uses. This balance should also be reflected in the structure of the ISU. We are prepared to engage in discussions on the possible creation of the post of cooperation officer within the Implementation Support Unit. Such professional will work under the guidance of a cooperation committee integrated by States Parties that will be rotate at regular intervals. Those two proposals are inextricably linked and should be addressed in tandem.

It is with optimism that we see progress in two of the main discussions undertaken during the ISP: the Tianjin Guidelines for a Code of Conduct, of which Brazil became a cosponsor; and a Scientific Advisory Body, whose format is yet to be defined. Assistance, response, and preparedness seem to be an area where there are some low-hanging fruits pending approval by the IX Review Conference. It is about time to reap what we have been sowing.

Mr. President,

Since the beginning of the last Intersessional Program (2018-2020), especially in the framework of the discussions of the Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness (MX 4), many countries have emphasized the importance of concretely addressing the threat of hostile use of biological and toxic agents against agriculture, livestock and the natural environment.

Brazil and Argentina are glad to propose a “One Health Surveillance Network” to promote direct dialogue, mutual support, joint projects and exchange of best practices between animal, plant and environmental surveillance services, safety and compliance agencies, laboratories, and other governmental institutions of the BWC States Parties. The Network is intended to be an action-oriented, multi-stakeholder cooperative network that will not require any specific procedures to govern its day-to-day activities. We would very much welcome all delegation’s support to Working Paper n. 19.

Mr. President,

To conclude, multilateralism is not at its finest hour, but it is still our best hope to find outcomes that would promote greater well-being and security for all. Despite the many hurdles and challenges ahead of us, we count on your skills. We are convinced that, guided by you, States Parties shall eventually gather their will and spare no efforts in agreeing to the required decisions at the IX Review Conference to strengthen the Convention and enable it to discharge in full its objectives and, thus, making the world a safer place.

Thank you.