

**Statement by the Czech Republic at the 9th Review Conference
of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)
Geneva, 28 November – 16 December 2022**

Mr. Chair,

The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and wishes to add the following remarks in our national capacity.

We are meeting at an unprecedented time, with one State Party to this Convention – Russia - waging a full-fledged war of armed aggression against another State Party to the BWC – Ukraine. In addition, Russia has threatened to use another type of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons, in the conflict.

The BWC community has unfortunately not been spared from the impact of the Russian aggression. For the past months, States Parties to the BWC, First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council have been fed with wild stories about alleged illicit activities by the United States of America in Ukrainian laboratories. We have examined the submissions provided by Russia in this regard. We have also examined the submissions provided by the United States and Ukraine in response to the Russian allegations. And our conclusion is very clear: The programmes run in Ukraine by the United States belong to the wide range of capacity-building and international assistance efforts provided under Art. X of the Convention, aimed at increasing biological security. This is in the interest of all of us. No evidence has been provided that would raise any doubts regarding the legitimacy of those activities. We are also not blind to the real motivation behind this slander campaign, which is to divert international attention from the illegal invasion and the atrocities committed by the Russian troops in Ukraine, including against the civilian population.

This is all the more deplorable as both Art. V and especially Art. VI of the BWC are important compliance safeguards whose integrity must be preserved, rather than undermined through manifestly abusive behaviour.

We therefore appeal to all States Parties to the Convention to oppose and stop the Russian attempts to hijack the agenda of the BWC, including at this 9th Review Conference, for its ill-intentioned goals.

There are far too many important issues to discuss that are related to the real purpose of this Conference which is advancing the BWC implementation.

Recent years have shown the immense impact that agents of biological origin can potentially have on our collective safety and security, and on our societies. The Czech Republic therefore believes the moment has come for all States Parties to explore, in a more structured and regularised manner, possible ways of further strengthening the Convention regime. We therefore support the Dutch-Canadian proposal on setting up the Open-ended Working Group with a two-year mandate.

We are also in favour of equipping the BWC with a scientific advisory mechanism. Science and technology underpins the implementation of the Convention. States Parties, especially developing countries, would profit from an independent mechanism carrying out a review of

relevant developments in the field and from receiving an assorted, independent and well-founded advice. Numerous consultations have taken place already at previous meetings. We are therefore of the view that this Conference should be prepared to act and choose a suitable format from the different options on the table. We are ready to discuss them during the upcoming three weeks and are prepared to exercise the necessary flexibility to arrive at a universally acceptable solution.

With regard to national implementation, the Czech Republic continues to be a responsible State Party to the Biological Weapons Convention, acting fully in line with its provisions:

Since the last Review Conference, our national legislation on the prohibition of biological weapons was updated to reflect the conclusions of previous BWC conferences, requirements contained in the United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 and international best practices to secure CBRN materials. Elements on prohibition of financing of activities related to research, development and stockpiling of biological weapons have been added. The amendment also enhances security of biological agents and toxins against theft, loss or misuse. Our national list of controlled items has also been harmonised with recommendations of international organisations and relevant export control regimes. The updated national framework now fully corresponds with the current security requirements related to biological agents and toxins.

National implementation is key to ensure efficient functioning of every international instrument. We therefore encourage all States Parties to periodically review and update their national legislation in line with the BWC.

Mr. Chair,

Before I conclude, I wish to thank the Implementation Support Unit for its tireless efforts during the preparatory process leading up to the Review Conference.

On behalf of the Czech Republic, I wish you every success in steering the Review Conference towards a successful outcome.