Finland general statement at the 9th Review Conference of the BTWC

Statement by Ms. Outi Hyvärinen,
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Mr. President,

Let me start by congratulating you, Ambassador Bencini, for your nomination as President of the 9th Review Conference. You have our full support.

Finland fully aligns itself with the statement by the European Union. We have a few additional remarks from our national perspective.

Finland is strongly committed to contribute to the success of the Ninth Review Conference. We are ready to work constructively with other States Parties and civil society in the coming three weeks. The Review Conference provides an opportunity to strengthen the global norm against biological weapons by improving global biosafety and biosecurity, advancing assistance, cooperation, response and preparedness of the States Parties. In the 21st century, as science and technology rapidly evolve, it is all the more important to maintain and strengthen the Convention and the norm it enshrines. We look forward to adopting forward-looking decisions and recommendations including a robust intersessional programme at the end of this meeting.

Mr. President,

International cooperation and assistance for peaceful purposes under article X are essential to ensure that States Parties can receive support for capacity building efforts in the fields of disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis, and response. Covid-19 pandemic has underlined the importance of Article X implementation. Finland chaired MX1 meeting in 2020 and we have submitted together with Georgia, Norway and the Philippines a working on Enhancing the Institutional Machinery of the Convention in the Context of Cooperation and Assistance Under Article X. We have also provided a financial contribution to the ISU aiming to strengthen the implementation of the Article X by supporting developing countries’ expertise and capacity to fulfil their obligations under the Convention.

We fully support the initiative proposing the establishment of a two-year Experts Working Group at this Review Conference, as we believe that it represents a significant opportunity towards ending two-decades long political logjam of inaction at the BTWC.

Along with new and rapid technological advances in life sciences and biotechnology, it is important to be able to identify emerging risks in dual use research and development that may have implications to the BTWC. Finland supports the establishment of a Science and Technology Review Process to strengthen the capacity to assess the implications of the relevant scientific and technological developments for the BTWC.
Furthermore, there are number of concrete initiatives on which consensus among States Parties has been emerging. Namely, the establishment of a voluntary fund for technical cooperation, further operationalizing assistance under Article VII, deepening collaborations on biosafety and biosecurity, adequately staffing the Implementation Support Unit to support these activities and enabling more agile decision making by delegating certain decision making powers to the Meeting of States Parties. We hope that States Parties will be able to take action on concrete measures to strengthen the Convention at this Review Conference.

Mr. President,

Regrettably, this long-awaited, important Ninth Review Conference takes place at a time when global and European security paradigm and architecture are changing. Finland strongly condemns Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine. It is a flagrant violation of international law. We firmly support Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Russia should withdraw all its armed forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine. We have firmly rejected and condemned in the strongest possible terms Russia’s attempted illegal annexation of the Ukrainian regions it has occupied. We will not recognize the illegal annexation of any Ukrainian region by Russia. Accountability for Russia’s brutal actions must be ensured.

Russia has been engaged in a campaign of disinformation in spreading unsubstantiated and unfounded claims, among other things, regarding alleged development of biological weapons in Ukraine. The processes under Article V and VI of the Convention were separate from the Review Conference and they have now been concluded.

Finally allow me to assure you once again that a successful Ninth Review Conference is very important to Finland. You can count on our support to work constructively towards successful outcome of this meeting.

Thank you