Mr Chairman,

This is a Statement of the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction on behalf of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

On behalf of the Global Partnership, I would like to commend you, Ambassador Bencini, for your chairmanship of the 9th BWC Review Conference and the excellent preparations. Please be ensured that all members of the Global Partnership will support you in every way to make this conference a success and strengthen the BWC.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Global Partnership – an initiative started at the Kananaskis Summit in Canada in June 2002. Over the past two decades, the Global Partnership has grown to 31 members and has proven itself to be the primary international threat reduction mechanism for biological and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

It is an honour for Germany to chair the Global Partnership this year.

Germany has focused on biological security during our Presidency. Firstly, the pandemic has demonstrated the devastating effects of the emergence of a dangerous pathogen to all of us. Secondly, rapid progress in the life sciences and biotechnology not only offers chances for new treatments of diseases but also poses risks for abuse. We see persisting and newly emerging biological threats, stemming from both state and non-state actors, which require continued engagement to mitigate global biological threats and increased efforts to strengthen the BWC.

In March, the Global Partnership issued a statement condemning Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine and the threat of use of weapons of mass destruction. The members of the
Global Partnership reaffirmed then – and reiterate now – our full support for and continued co-operation with our fellow member Ukraine.

We also denounced, and continue to denounce, the ongoing disinformation campaign by Russia against threat reduction measures conducted by members of the Global Partnership, in particular the U.S. and Ukraine. Russia’s fabricated claims and false allegations were rejected by the overwhelming majority of the States Parties at the BWC’s Article V Formal Consultative Meeting in September and most recently dismissed at the UN Security Council in November during Russia’s efforts under Article VI, including by many GP members.

In October, Germany held a Global Partnership Conference on Current Biosecurity Challenges in Berlin. Stakeholders from governments, international organisations, think tanks, universities and research institutes, the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries, and NGOs discussed dual-use research of concern that could be misapplied to develop biological and toxin weapons. They also addressed cyber-biosecurity, the possible use of pathogens as a weapon, and bio-related disinformation, and explored threat reduction measures.

At the Conference, the Global Partnership issued a Declaration on Biological Security, which called upon all States Parties to the BWC to act jointly and constructively at this Review Conference and overcome the longstanding stalemate of the Convention. We believe States Parties must come together and act jointly to make the BWC fit for the challenges of the 21st century. The Declaration encouraged decisions by this Review Conference to enhance compliance, increase transparency, promote confidence building, and strengthen the operational effectiveness of the Convention, and expressed support for an experts group to study these issues and identify concrete steps to strengthen implementation of the Convention in all its aspects.

The Declaration further underlined the need to examine the new opportunities and challenges that rapid developments in the life sciences and biotechnology create. Therefore, the Global Partnership supports the establishment by the BWC Review Conference of a systematic and structured mechanism for reviewing scientific and technological developments relevant to the BWC. At the same time, we are resolved to enhance collaboration in global biosafety, laboratory biosecurity, and oversight for life sciences research whose results could be misused for biological weapons purposes, to prevent such misuse and preserve the prohibition of such weapons, given the recognized need for substantial improvement in these areas.

During our Presidency, Germany had the privilege to chair the GP Biological Security Working Group (BSWG) with Canada. The BSWG has met four times so far and will meet again here in Geneva next week. The Group coordinates and collaborates on an ongoing basis to develop and deliver projects and programmes to mitigate threats to biological security and to discuss proposals to strengthen the BWC. Intersessional meetings were dedicated to assistance to Ukraine and to Kazakhstan’s proposal to establish an International Agency for Biosafety.
The Global Partnership’s Signature Initiative to Mitigate Deliberate Biological Threats in Africa, developed and delivered by the Global Partnership in close co-operation with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, other African partners, and the BWC Implementation Support Unit, has deepened and enhanced work with partner countries and organisations in Africa to strengthen capacities to prevent, detect and respond to biological threats posed by high-consequence pathogens. We are proud of the accomplishments to date and pledge to intensify our work based on the Initiative’s four pillars: 1) biosafety and biosecurity, 2) national frameworks, 3) surveillance and epidemic intelligence and 4) non-proliferation. We consider the Initiative to be a key contribution to international cooperation in accordance with Art. X of the BWC, as well as with UNSCR 1540’s Operative Paragraphs 1–3.

Two Wilton Park Conferences, hosted by the United Kingdom and Canada, were held in England and South Africa to operationalise this important initiative further, which could become a model for other regions of the world. UNODA will host a Side Event on the Africa Signature Initiative on 6 December; we hope to see you there.

The Global Partnership makes many meaningful contributions to strengthen the work of the BWC and provides significant support to States Parties in line with Article X of the Convention. Since the last Review Conference, Global Partnership members have delivered approximately $X USD in international cooperation assistance to prevent, detect, and respond to biological threats. Details of this work are chronicled in a working paper submitted by Canada, which will be introduced during the review of Article X.

GP assistance is guided by the Biosecurity Deliverables, which provide the parameters for common and coordinated action by GP members to: i) secure and account for dangerous pathogens; ii) prevent the deliberate misuse of pathogens; iii) enhance regional surveillance networks; iv) reinforce biological non-proliferation instruments; and iv) promote responsible conduct in biological sciences. In delivering effective biological threat reduction programming, the Global Partnership recognizes the imperative of multi-sectoral engagement and commits to continue to champion collaboration at the health-security interface.

For more than two decades, the Global Partnership has been at the forefront of international efforts to mitigate biological threats. The first and most important line of defence to combat bioweapons proliferation, however, is the BWC. It is the job of this Review Conference to identify and agree practical steps to ensure the BWC will be able to fulfil this key role in future years.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

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