

Ninth Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

Geneva; 28 November–16 December 2022

Statement by Germany, 28 November 2022

– CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –

Mr President,

Let me congratulate you, Ambassador Bencini, on assuming the chairmanship of this Review Conference and assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation. We also would like to congratulate the elected Vice-Presidents and express our appreciation for the professional work of the Implementation Support Unit.

Germany fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, which will be delivered later during the debate. In addition, we would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

The prohibition of biological and toxin weapons as enshrined in the Biological Weapons Convention is comprehensive and provides a solid foundation for our work. Yet, changes in the international security environment as well as scientific and technological developments mean that the BWC is in need of strengthening, now more than ever.

Germany condemns the Russian Federation's unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and its repeated unsubstantiated claims about U.S./Ukrainian-run bioweapons labs. We consider it unacceptable to levy such false accusations against States Parties that are in full compliance with its international obligations under the Biological Weapons Convention. This not only causes distrust and mischief, but also can ultimately lead to carelessly undermining the BWC.

Rapid advances in biology, biotechnology and other life sciences equally pose challenges for biological security while bringing along opportunities for new treatments of diseases. This is why Germany has actively worked for the establishment of an effective, flexible and inclusive Science and Technology review mechanism, which would support the implementation of the BWC in all its aspects. Together with Canada, we have submitted a Working Paper that summarizes survey results and key questions regarding a Science and Technology review mechanism. We think that the time is ripe to move forward on this important issue. The German delegation will continue to work constructively with you, Mr

President, with the Facilitator for Science and Technology and with States Parties to reach consensus on the establishment of such a mechanism.

This Review Conference represents a valuable opportunity to set a new course for the work in the intersessional period. We are therefore pleased to co-sponsor the proposal by Canada and the Netherlands to establish an Experts Working Group charged with evaluating possible concrete measures to strengthen the Convention, and we look forward to engaging with others on constructive and feasible proposals. We would like to see a more flexible intersessional process, including in terms of decision-making, and we strongly support the extension of the ISU's mandate and its possible expansion.

Germany contributes to implementation of Article X of the BWC and to the goals of the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. We have been carrying out a range of biological threat reduction activities through the German Biosecurity Programme, which is now in its 10th year, and the "Enable and Enhance Initiative." A Side Event on the German Biosecurity Programme will be held on 5 December.

Together with Canada, Mexico and the U.S., Germany submits the Working Paper "Reinforcing Laboratory Biosafety and Biosecurity Internationally" and together with Austria, Belgium, Chile, France, Iraq, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, Thailand and the U.S., Germany submits the Working Paper "Biorisk management standards and their role in BTWC implementation."

In addition, we are pleased to co-host a Side Event with Slovenia and the EU on bioterrorism on 9 December.

Germany welcomes constructive and pragmatic proposals to increase transparency, build confidence in compliance, enhance national implementation as well as international cooperation and assistance, and raise awareness of biological risks. We firmly believe that progress in these areas will bolster our efforts to strengthen the BWC, and we look forward to working with others towards this end.

The UN Secretary-General's Investigation Mechanism is currently the only independent mechanism available to react to the alleged use of chemical and biological weapons. While never activated for a biological case, the mechanism is in good shape, thanks to the diligent work of UNODA and the active and ongoing support of many States Parties, Germany included. We will host a Side Event with the Robert Koch Institute on 8 December to present the findings of our recent UNSGM Capstone Exercise.

To operate effectively, the BWC regime needs a solid financial basis. We therefore call on all States Parties to pay their assessed contributions in time and in full. Last but not least, we welcome the initiative to introduce a gender perspective on biological disarmament in the BWC regime.

Mr President,

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for international cooperation, but also for a strong BWC regime: In the event of disease outbreaks of unclear origin, transparency and

confidence in States Parties' compliance with the BWC can help prevent misunderstandings, reduce mistrust and fight the unintentional or deliberate spread of false information.

Disinformation, while not a new phenomenon, has reached unprecedented dimensions in the BWC recently with Russia's allegations against biological threat reduction work in Ukraine, conducted first and foremost by the U.S., but also other countries including Germany. Germany unequivocally rejects these allegations as baseless and unfounded. We must not allow that a State Party abuses the provisions of the BWC, at the expense of legitimate and important cooperation activities in line with Art. X of the BWC.

Russia's fabricated claims and false allegations against the U.S. and Ukraine 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. We consider these processes closed.

Mr President,

This Conference takes place in difficult times. It will take some effort to ensure that the Convention remains a bulwark against current and future biological weapons threats, while ensuring the peaceful use of biology and biotechnology. At the same time, many States Parties have expressed their unwavering commitment to the BWC and their determination to strengthen it. We hope and believe that together we can steer this Conference to a substantive and meaningful outcome. Germany stands ready to support you, Mr. President, in this endeavor and to play a constructive part in achieving that outcome.

Thank you.