



PHILIPPINES

9th Review Conference of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)

General Debate

Mister President,

My delegation congratulates you on your election and thanks you, the bureau, and the ISU for your invaluable work.

We associate ourselves with the statement delivered by Cambodia on behalf of ASEAN and by Azerbaijan on behalf of NAM. We also welcome Namibia as the newest State Party to this Convention.

Our commitment to the BWC finds anchor in our people's aspiration to be free from the threat of weapons of mass destruction and to chart a path towards sustainable development that includes harnessing the potential of the life sciences.

As our President stressed at the U.N. General Assembly, the Philippines is building an enabling groundwork to enhance our capacity to utilize the life sciences, as we contribute to global governance structures facilitating their peaceful uses.

We have operationalized this Convention with the whole of government approach to carry out the CBRN National Action Plan. We have organized with partners activities in the ASEAN Regional Forum and thru the Manila-based CBRN Centre of Excellence in Southeast Asia to embed the Convention's goals firmly in the regional agenda.

Mister President,

Whilst we acknowledge that the Conference meets amidst trying times, we are convinced that with collective political will, States Parties can take decisive steps to uphold the significance of this Convention and affirm its place as a robust platform for solutions and innovation in the 21st century.

We urge all States Parties to seize this opportunity deliver concrete outcomes that reinforce the value of multilateralism, amidst challenges exposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, threats to the security of our populations, and the game-changing speed and scale of diffusion of life sciences.

The pandemic was a stirring reminder that the outbreak of any infectious disease – whether deliberate, accidental, or natural – knows no borders and imperils us all. It exposed the lack of established mechanisms to facilitate effective and coordinated response to such an outbreak and to verify instances of a possible biological accident, misuse or attack.

This Conference provides the opportunity to go beyond the afflictions that have hobbled our work on the Convention in the past and set it in its rightful place in the rules-based disarmament architecture in the 21st century. The meetings of experts from 2018 to 2021 have generated momentum for proposals and ideas serving as the foundation for decisions on the way forward.

That we have a shared stake in the success of this Conference, and in a coherent, structured, and effective BWC regime, is a compelling fact.

For the Philippines, a reasonably ambitious outcome includes the following:

- First, concrete measures to enhance international cooperation and assistance, including on preparedness and response. Strengthening response capabilities begins with the building of strong national capacities, as well as mechanisms that enable these capacities to be applied swiftly, effectively, and in a coordinated manner during a crisis. We need to bridge gaps between developed and developing countries in the field of biotechnology, genetic engineering, and microbiology, affirm the inalienable

right of all developing countries to peaceful uses of biology, and enable the exercise of this right in a manner that is responsible, safe, and secure.

- Second, an advisory mechanism recognizing the need for a proper balance between risk mitigation and promoting innovation to maximize benefits from peaceful uses of biotechnology. Interfaces with industry and the academe are essential.
- Third, a framework organic to BWC that supports the strengthening of biosecurity and biosafety. Expert-driven technical biorisk management standards play a role in complementing our efforts to promote responsible biorisk management. Export controls, applied in a non-discriminatory manner, are also key in achieving the Convention's nonproliferation goals.
- Finally, a conclusive agreement to set in place a forward-looking structure for operationalizing all aspects of the Convention.

We underline that any successful outcome must include a clear pathway towards the resumption of negotiations for a legally binding protocol that deals with all articles of the Convention in a balanced manner, and informed by scientific and technical advice.

We will work with all States Parties to achieve consensus on practical and substantive measures, including an Inter-sessional Process that is balanced, comprehensive, purpose-driven and results-oriented. We will support steps towards stronger national implementation, and to bring the Convention and the ISU on sound financial ground.

Mister President,

We commend States Parties for all efforts to implement the Convention through national policies, capacity-building and technical cooperation, experts' networks, and exchange of best practices.

We pay tribute to the vast global community of scientists, academics, experts, and civil society organizations that have supported BWC States Parties. They are vital actors in the ecosystem sustaining this Convention.

We encourage this Conference to synergize our collaborations further, on the global and regional level, and to heed the call of the U.N. Secretary-General to re-imagine partnerships, including with the industry and with men and women equally on board across all efforts, that leverage linkages between our work on disarmament and non-proliferation and efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Philippines and partners have organized a workshop and an exhibit - to be opened this evening - spotlighting the role of women in the past, present and future of the BWC and how gender balance and mainstreaming across all areas of BWC implementation serve our goal for a robust, and effective BWC regime.

Mr. President, you can count on my delegation to engage actively and constructively throughout this Conference.

I thank you, Mister President.