

Mr. President

Let me start by congratulating you on your election and also congratulate you and the Implementation Support Unit for the impressive work in preparation of this Review Conference. Portugal will firmly support you in this endeavor towards a substantive outcome for the next years, in a view to successfully commemorate the important historical milestone of the 50th anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention.

The Biological Weapons Convention is a cornerstone for the international security disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and is central to a framework of mutual reinforcing mechanisms, with a particular highlight to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the United Nations Secretary General Mechanism for investigation of alleged use of chemical and biological weapons, the International Health Regulations, and the 1540 Security Council Resolution.

For all these mechanisms, simulation exercises could play an important role in its effective implementation and can constitute an opportunity to achieve concrete actions with a positive outcome to the Convention. In recent years Portugal conducted several simulation exercises, with the participation of observers from several States-Parties and relevant Intergovernmental Organizations such as World Organization for Animal Health, World Health Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization, and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs.

Portugal actively supports and promotes universal adherence to the Convention and we welcome all States that acceded to the Convention since the eight Review Conference, noting with satisfaction the progress made on universalization in the last years, and calling on all States not party to the Convention to adhere thereto without further delay.

Mr. President

Portugal aligns with the general statement delivered by the European Union. Portugal also co-sponsors the working paper Submitted by Canada and the Netherlands concerning a proposal for inclusion in the final document of the ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention regarding the establishment of a temporary experts working group.

The Biological Weapons Convention faces many challenges for the future, being the issues related to the Scientific and Technological developments, as reiterated by many countries, one of the most important.

Let me also highlight the relevance of biosafety and biosecurity cooperation programs that can also constitute concrete actions to achieve a broader biosafety and biosecurity culture with expected positive outcomes to enhancing national implementation, increasing international cooperation and improving preparedness, response and assistance, constituting a basis to build the BTWC as a consistent and effective regime for the future.

With a view to tackling current and emerging issues, Portugal firmly supports a substantive work program for the next years capable of addressing, *inter alia*, the scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention, confidence building and compliance, bio-risk management, bioterrorism prevention, biosecurity cyber-related threats and international cooperation and assistance. We believe that all these efforts, can contribute to take forward the objectives of the Convention.

Thank you, Mr. President.