

Statement
at the General Debate of the Ninth Review Conference of
the Biological and Toxins Weapons Convention
Geneva, 29 November 2022

Mr. President,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Ambassador Bencini, on the assumption of your duties as the President of the 9th BTWC Review Conference. Please accept my most sincere appreciation for the highly diligent and constructive way in which you led the preparatory process of this Conference under difficult circumstances. I also extend my gratitude to the members of the Implementation Support Unit who have supported you in the fulfillment of your responsibilities.

In addition to the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union, I will present a few brief points in my national capacity.

As we have marked this year the 50th anniversary of the signing of the BWC, we affirm our unequivocal support for the BTWC as the legally binding instrument banning development, production, stockpiling and use of biological agents or toxins as weapons. The Convention is one of the major pillars of the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and has contributed to addressing global threats and to strengthening international peace and security.

We consider that this milestone event must be an opportunity for States Parties to renew their commitment to the Convention, and to explore constructively further means to consolidate its framework and enhance compliance, improve bio-safety and bio-security at the international level, advance international cooperation and assistance.

It is our shared responsibility to ensure that the BTWC will continue to stand the test of time, moreover in the light of increasingly dynamic and difficult to anticipate developments in life sciences, including biotechnology and synthetic biology, with effects multiplied by AI, big data, quantum computing.

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

We are meeting today in a fundamentally altered security environment, marked by increased tensions and new global challenges and threats.

We have all witnessed in the last three years a highly disruptive pandemic, with significant consequences on our lives, societies, and economies. But the COVID-19 pandemic also provided us some very important lessons regarding resilience and responsiveness, cooperation and

assistance. Moreover, it offered us a powerful reminder of the highly disruptive potential the biological agents can have and this should also impact the way we approach and implement the BTWC, while recognizing the benefits of medical and pharmaceutical research and the wide use for peaceful purposes of biological agents and toxins.

It is important to mention that the RevCon takes place during Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, which we condemn in the strongest terms. We deplore Russia's behavior in seeking to undermine the international regimes and its international obligations, including those stemming from the BTWC, through disinformation campaigns and false allegations, in particular against Ukraine. We see these only as attempts to distract our attention and provide justification for the ongoing brutal war of aggression. Moreover, any further attempts to derail our works at the RevCon by restating these allegations would only prove the lack of interest to engage constructively.

Mr. President,

Romania upholds the principles and objectives of the BWC and supports consistently its full implementation at the national, regional, and international level. Efforts towards the universalisation of the Convention, the strengthening of the provisions relating to national preparedness and response, international cooperation and assistance, improving the confidence building measures should remain a priority with a view to enhance the BWC effectiveness.

In order to address both existing and emerging challenges, confidence building measures have an important role to play in promoting the purposes of the BWC, as they are so far, the only substantive commitment to build confidence through transparency agreed upon by all States Parties. We reiterate the importance of submission of annual compliance reports by all States Parties and support renewed efforts to increase participation in the CBMs process.

We also believe bio-risk management and bio-terrorism prevention measures would benefit further consolidation and we aim to do so at the national level, including through strengthening our preparedness. Over the last years, rapidly expanding knowledge in synthetic biology has raised deep concerns over "dual-use research" as the same technologies that fuel scientific advances could also be misused to develop biological weapons or for bioterrorism purposes.

In this respect, in June 2019, Romania and the Implementation Support Unit co-organized a thematic workshop on "The benefits and misuse of biotechnology in the context of Agenda 2030", focused on fostering endeavors in countering biological threats, promoting the benefits of biotechnology, secure non-proliferation of biological agents and avoid their misuse.

Romania attaches great importance to cooperation and assistance under Article X of the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention (BWC) and remains committed to facilitating and participating in the exchange of equipment, materials, and scientific and technological information for the use of biological agents and toxins for peaceful purposes.

Romania fulfils its obligations under Article X through a plethora of projects, conducted mainly by two national institutes: The "Cantacuzino" National Medico-Military Institute for Research and Development, with two WHO regional collaborative laboratories, whose primary objectives are to survey human health status in relation with circulating pathogenic strains and identify strains of specific micro-organisms and the National Institute for Infectious Diseases "Matei Balș", responsible for patient management in the context of emerging outbreaks and potential

victims of incidents or attacks with biological agents but also conducting medical research, through its Centre for Bio-molecular Applied Research in Infectious Diseases.

Romania remains convinced that in order to address the issues relevant for the BWC, all State Parties must take concerted action to meet the emerging and disruptive challenges and continue to meet the goal of the BTWC, deterring and banning development, acquisition, stockpiling and use of biological and toxins weapons, also by securing the financial predictability and sustainability of the Convention.

We welcome in this regard the proposal regarding the establishment of a Temporary Experts Working Group, where we could all share ideas and perspectives with a view to strengthen the Convention.

To conclude, Mr. Chair, it is our joint responsibility but also an individual responsibility of each State Party to render the Convention more relevant and to facilitate a more robust implementation. Romania, as a member of the BWC community, stands ready to constructively work under your guidance for a successful meeting.

Thank you!