

Statement on Biological Weapons
UN General Assembly First Committee
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Mr Chair, Distinguished representatives,

The Biological Weapons Convention stands as the world's foundational norm against one of humanity's most abhorrent categories of weapons. Yet, half a century after its entry into force, it still lacks a formal verification mechanism. Today, renewed attention to BWC verification—including AI-based approaches—offers both opportunity and responsibility: the opportunity to modernise and operationalise the BWC, and the responsibility to do so in a manner that reinforces confidence, cooperation and collective security.

Verification is not an end in itself. It is a tool to build confidence — between states, between scientific communities, and between governments and the global public — in the fulfillment of biological disarmament obligations. Advances in science and technology, particularly in AI, offer new avenues to enhance transparency, detect anomalies and support compliance monitoring. Properly applied, AI can help identify patterns in life-science research and production, improve anomaly detection in data streams, and assist in analysing open-source information — all without compromising legitimate research or commercial confidentiality.

Yet, technological innovation alone cannot substitute for political will. Verification will depend on layered approaches: from robust declarations and transparency initiatives to cooperative consultation and, when necessary, on-site assessment. AI can augment, but not replace, these essential human, and institutional, foundations of trust.

A recent study on BWC verification from VERTIC & King's College London underscores this point. It finds that emerging technologies and disciplines, such as microbial forensics, remote sensing and open-source analysis, can strengthen off-site monitoring and increase confidence in on-site identification and analysis. However, it also concludes that no single measure can ensure compliance.

In this context, renewed attention to verification is welcome. Incremental, cooperative steps — practising consultation and clarification, exercising verification techniques in the field, and building shared understanding of uncertainties — can prepare the ground for a future mechanism that is both technically sound and politically feasible.

Mr Chair,

AI and other emerging tools must serve the BWC's ultimate objective: preventing the re-emergence of biological weapons in any form. This requires that AI systems themselves be

developed and used responsibly, in accordance with international and national laws, ethical norms, and scientific integrity.

States, both collectively through the BWC Working Group and individually at the national level, along with civil society experts, must first define the objectives of a verification mechanism and then determine how best to design available tools to support those objectives in a manner that is financially viable and politically acceptable.

By investing today in verification literacy, responsible innovation, and international collaboration, we can ensure that the BWC remains fit for purpose in an age of rapid technological change.

In strengthening verification, we strengthen confidence.
And in strengthening confidence, we strengthen peace.

We thank you for your attention.