

**Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention**  
**Meeting of States Parties, Geneva, 4-8 December 2017**  
**General debate, 4 December 2017**

**Statement by Bulgaria**

Mr Chairman,

Let me start with congratulating you on your chairmanship. We value your preparatory work for this meeting and can assure you of the full support of our delegation for your endeavours to lead this forum to tangible outcomes.

I would also like to express our appreciation for the excellent work of the Implementation Support Unit for efficiently and professionally running the whole BWC-related work.

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement of the European Union to be delivered later on. I will make some remarks from national perspective.

My country upholds the principles and objectives of the BWC and supports consistently its full implementation and strengthening. As the potential risk stemming from the biological agents and toxins continues to pose significant challenges to our security, the BWC, with its key role in the international efforts to prohibit and prevent the use of biological and toxin weapons, is more relevant than ever.

We share the regret that the Eighth Review Conference last year was not able to agree on an intersessional programme; an opportunity was missed to make progress towards strengthening of the convention and its implementation. The realization of the full potential of the BWC as a meaningful political instrument for disarmament and non-proliferation depends on ensuring that its operations live up to this task. We expect that this MSP will fulfil the mandate given by the Review Conference and will be in a position to reach consensus on an intersessional process. We support adoption of a work programme that is substantive and more operational and focused. In this regard we consider the proposal made by the three depositary states – the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, in the working paper BWC/MSP/2017/WP.10, as a constructive one and a good basis for agreeing on an intersessional process. Strengthening of the national implementation and compliance, structured science and technology review process, confidence building measures, assistance and cooperation, universalization have to be, in our view, among the key elements of the intersessional programme.

Full compliance with the provisions of the Convention and strengthened national implementation are needed in order to increase the effectiveness of the BWC. With the current lack of consensus on the issue of verification, we support work towards pragmatic options that could achieve similar goals. Confidence in compliance and transparency can be enhanced by means of exchange of information, experience and best practices, as well as voluntary peer review process.

An important element in enhancing transparency and mutual trust are the confidence-building measures; regular submission of CBMs reports is important national tool on implementation and

compliance. We support work towards increased relevance and comprehensiveness of the CBMs-forms. The ISU's supportive role in compiling CBMs is of significant value.

Full and effective implementation of the BWC provisions could be further enhanced through improvement of national legal and enforcement frameworks, where necessary, including biosafety and biosecurity measures. An effective national export control system is also an important requirement when we aim at strengthening the national implementation. There are also other ways and means in this regard, like raising awareness, training and educational programmes not only for those with access to biological agents and toxins relevant to the BWC but also for broader public.

A more effective and structured way to review scientific and technological developments and their impact on the BWC is needed in order to keep abreast with the progress in life sciences. We see this issue as an important element of an intersessional programme and we believe a common view could be fostered how to handle the existing expertise in a more effective manner.

The Secretary-General's Mechanism for investigation of alleged use of chemical and biological weapons is a unique tool for carrying out prompt investigations in case of a violation of the BWC. Bulgaria is committed to work to strengthen this mechanism. We have provided contribution with both qualified experts and laboratories to the relevant rosters.

We also identified experts to be included among assistance providers and experts in support of the Extended Assistance Programmes for BWC implementation under the relevant EU Council Decision.

Universal adherence of all States to the BWC remains key priority and we commend the efforts by the chair of the MSP in this regard as well as valuable work carried out by the ISU.

We are looking forward to productive and constructive deliberations aimed at achieving consensus on a substantial intersessional programme.