Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to offer my congratulations on your selection as Chair of this BWC Meeting of States Parties, and to assure you of my Delegation’s full cooperation. We look forward to working with you this week for a successful outcome.

Mr. Chairman, the United States would like to see this Meeting of States Parties (MSP) adopt at least some modest decisions or recommendations on substantive matters. We believe there is enough common ground to take small steps forward on science and technology and Article VII. But we are not optimistic. We had useful discussions in the Meetings of Experts but were still unable to develop common proposals. We are concerned that this week will repeat last year’s experience, where a few delegations insisted that addressing such issues was somehow beyond the mandate of the MSP and blocked all progress. At the 2017 MSP, my government and those of many other delegations here today agreed to a new, expanded intersessional process with the expectation that States Parties would vigorously seek to develop practical common understandings and steps to promote effective action to reduce biological threats, enhance cooperation, and strengthen the Convention. Indeed, many of us have done so. My delegation appreciates the many constructive proposals and ideas that have been put forward.

Despite this, next month we will enter the final year of our intersessional program with few results. It is now time to begin thinking about what actions Parties might take at the Ninth Review Conference in 2021, including on framing a more effective intersessional program. Perhaps next year’s Meetings of Experts should focus on exchanging ideas and proposals for the Review Conference, since the 2020 Meeting of States Parties is unlikely to act on them.
Indeed, Mr. Chairman, a key item of business for this MSP is to adopt arrangements for the next Review Conference. My Delegation appreciates the work of the Implementation Support Unit and the United Nations to provide us with a time period in which we can hold this meeting here in the Palais des Nations and with cost estimates for the Review Conference and its Preparatory Committee meetings. The United States firmly believes that a substantive preparatory process is the key to a successful Review Conference. With such a process, we see no reason why the Review Conference should take more than two weeks. Without such a process, on the other hand, we are skeptical that a third week would help us reach consensus.

Mr. Chairman, the United States is pleased that, in spite of the stalemate on substantive issues, States Parties did adopt important financial reforms at last year’s MSP. These reforms have improved the situation modestly this year. After having to endure contracts measured in months, Implementation Support Unit (ISU) staff have now been given one-year contracts, and of course – unlike last year’s MSP – this year’s Meeting will last the full four days provided for in the current program. But more needs to be done. We have not solved the core problem: if States Parties do not pay their dues, and if those with arrears do not settle those debts, we could be forced to shorten the length of meetings and of ISU contracts again. We appreciate your work, Mr. Chairman, on these matters this year and hope this meeting will request next year’s Chair to continue working to address them. Surely the value of the BWC as a bulwark against the threat of biological weapons far exceeds the small contributions States Parties are asked to make to ensure that it remains viable.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.