



EU key messages on universalisation

Meeting of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

Geneva, 4-8 December 2017

Mr Chairman,

I have the honour to deliver some key messages on behalf of the European Union on universalisation.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with these messages.

We would like to thank you for your report on universalisation activities and recognise your valuable efforts in this regard.

The BTWC has reached almost universal membership with 179 States Parties. However, six States have signed, but not ratified the Convention and 11 States have neither signed nor ratified it. Further efforts to promote universal adherence are of utmost importance to strengthen the global norm against biological and toxin weapons and to reduce the global risk of such weapons being acquired or used by States or non-States actors. We call on all States not yet party to join the BTWC without delay.

In this context, the EU also actively supports the universalisation of the 1925 Geneva Protocol. For more than 90 years, the Protocol has served as a cornerstone of international efforts to prohibit the use of biological and chemical weapons. It still is, even after the entry into force of the BTWC. The two instruments form together a coherent normative architecture.

Since the Sixth Review Conference of the BTWC in 2006, the European Union has provided EUR 6.3 million to various activities in support of universalisation and implementation of the Convention. 26 workshops, regional and national, have been organised, in each and every continent, to raise awareness among relevant authorities and increase understanding of the benefits of joining. These efforts have contributed to the accession of 24 States to the BTWC since 2006.

We note that four more States became States Parties after having participated in EU-sponsored activities in 2016 and 2017. We warmly welcome Guinea, Nepal, Liberia and Samoa and are looking forward to Haiti and Tanzania joining the Convention soon. We

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

acknowledge the efforts of several other African countries – Central African Republic, Chad, Djibouti and Namibia – to start their respective ratification processes.

We would like to thank Fiji for hosting the latest regional workshop on BTWC universalisation for the Pacific region on 27-28 July 2017, which was part of the EU-funded activities carried out by the Implementation Support Unit. In addition to Samoa, we were pleased to see Kiribati, Micronesia, Niue and Tuvalu participating in the workshop and showing interest in the Convention.

Further EU-funded activities are being planned for 2018, in particular in Africa. In-country activities will be conducted at the request of States not yet party to the BTWC, starting with those who are close to accession. These activities will build on the discussions and outcomes from previous regional workshops, transferring them to a national context and national circumstances. They will include the preparation of a universalisation work plan tailored for each State, with the involvement of national stakeholders.

Mr. Chairman,

The EU supports the adoption of an action plan on universalisation for the BTWC, which could be coordinated by the Implementation Support Unit. Such an action plan could outline activities carried out by States Parties and regional and international organisations, including outreach visits and events, joint or coordinated demarches, translation of relevant documents and incentives such as information exchange on assistance offers. The Meeting of States Parties could take stock of the implementation of the action plan on an annual basis, and update it, as appropriate.

Furthermore, we support the organisation of dedicated sessions or working group meetings on universalisation during the Intersessional Process in order to improve the coordination of outreach activities between various actors, enable a better planning of regional initiatives and ensure ownership of universalisation efforts by all States Parties.

The EU remains committed to providing support to State signatories and States not yet party to the Convention at their request. We encourage those States to engage in BTWC activities and meetings and consider voluntary implementation of the Convention prior to the accession thereto.

Our efforts to promote universalisation and implementation of the BTWC go hand in hand. Once a State has joined the Convention, legislative and other capacity-building assistance can be provided to help countries to implement their obligations and further benefit from international cooperation. 10 countries – Cameroon, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Iraq, Malawi, Malaysia, Sierra Leone, Yemen, Lebanon and Nepal – benefit from such extended assistance programmes under the current EU Council Decision.

We are grateful to the BTWC Implementation Support Unit for the continued professional implementation of these and other EU-funded assistance activities, as set out in EU Council Decision 2016/51/CFSP of 18 January 2016.

Thank you, Mr Chairman