Mr. Chair,

The Philippines associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Venezuela, on behalf of NAM.

In our national capacity, we reiterate our unwavering commitment to the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, recognizing the integral role of the Biological Weapons Convention in this regard.

The universalization and comprehensive, coordinated implementation of the Convention remain fully relevant to the international security architecture, and must take into account on one hand the indispensable value of life sciences in achieving the sustainable development agenda, and on the other hand, the threats of accidents, misuse, and terroristic acts involving biological agents.
Mr. Chair,

The Philippines attaches great importance to a continued multi-stakeholder and cross-cutting approach to achieve the Convention’s objectives. We acknowledge the contributions of international and regional organizations, the scientific community and industry, the academe, think-tanks, NGOs and CSOs in assisting States Parties in adopting a coordinated and holistic strategy towards effective treaty implementation.

We commend the work done at the five Meetings of Experts (MXs) in August which enabled States Parties to engage in focused and substantive discussions to take forward common understandings and effective action to strengthen the Convention. Sustaining the vigour of the MX process, through its interactive format, is crucial as we pursue a productive ISP in the lead-up to the 2021 Review Conference.

Mr. Chair,

We are aware of the differing capacities and resources of States Parties in fully meeting their obligations under the Convention. We thus underscore the importance of international cooperation and assistance activities under Article X, as well as in addressing preparedness and response gaps at the operational level. The MX1 this year, which the Philippines had the honor of chairing, generated rich discussions not only on the challenges and obstacles, but also good practices, innovative approaches and opportunities for improved synergies among stakeholders. They provide good basis for elaborating concrete
measures to shape more robust and sustainable cooperation mechanisms within the framework of the Convention.

The Philippines also had the privilege of hosting a Regional Workshop on Science and Technology in Manila held from 21 to 22 November 2018, in cooperation with the European Union (EU) and the Implementation Support Unit (ISU). It gathered 55 experts from across Asia, and underlined, among other points, the need to convey the relevance of the Convention to the everyday activities and research in life sciences and to strengthen the connection between our discussions in Geneva with practice on the ground.

Mr. Chair,

At the national level, the Philippines continues to implement a unified and whole-of-government approach to counter the threat of WMDs, under the CBRN National Action Plan. Our security, health, S&T and diplomatic sectors regularly coordinate to improve our regulations, processes and infrastructure for threat reduction, risk management, preparedness and response, while also leveraging the excellent bilateral, regional and international partnerships formed throughout the years in knowledge exchange and capacity-building. On transparency measures, the Philippines has strived to submit reports on confidence building measures (CBMs). We recognize the value of this tool and other voluntary CBMs, even as discussions on institutionalized monitoring, assessment and verification mechanisms are ongoing.
Mr. Chair,

We share the concerns of other States Parties on the financial issues that have perennially challenged our work and ISU. In this regard, we highly appreciate the thoroughness with which you have worked over the last months to study the issues and propose common ground solutions. We believe that the urgency of this matter requires us to take timely decisions in this MSP and we fully support the adoption of practical measures, on the basis of consensus, that would place the Convention on sound financial ground.

In closing, the Philippines wishes to refer to the paper issued last May by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres where he affirmed that “the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) remains the primary international framework for responding to the challenges” of the acquisition, development and use of biological weapons. He also raised a challenge to the States Parties on the points of strengthening BWC institutionally, reinforcing implementation mechanisms and setting in place operational capacities to respond to biological attacks and provisions to verify compliance with the Convention. We agree that these are salient facets of our work which merit the full attention and the committed engagement of all States Parties during the ISP.

I thank you Mr. Chair and assure you of our delegation’s full support.