Thank you, Mr. President. My Delegation would like to thank our Pakistani colleague, Mr. Usman Iqbal Jadoon, both for his work in chairing MX4 in August and for preparing Annex 1 of the factual report.

My Delegation was very pleased to see the active participation by many delegations during MX4, which we believe demonstrates the importance that Parties attach to having effective assistance, response, and preparedness mechanisms in place.

The international community will face operational and logistical challenges in responding to any catastrophic disease outbreak, but particularly one caused deliberately, and as States Parties, it is our responsibility to think through those challenges and attempt to mitigate them ahead of time.

As Annex 1 of the summary report notes, and as Mr. Jadoon reminded us this morning, there seems to be widespread agreement among Parties on the need to make progress on our ability to put the provisions of Article VII into practice in the event of a deliberate biological attack.

We note in particular that there is growing agreement on South Africa’s proposal on guidelines to help a State Party in preparing an assistance request.

My Delegation continues to believe that this proposal has enormous merit, and we very much hope that BWC States Parties can continue to build on this consensus in the remainder of the current intersessional program.

To that end, we will reiterate our plea to other delegations to not only study the South African proposal, but provide them with feedback and comments, so that we might at last take a step forward on this issue, which has been under discussion for quite some time.
• It is clear to us that any such in-depth discussions need to take place in advance of the next Meeting of Experts, given the limited time available to us.

• We were pleased to see MX4 Agenda Item 9, on assistance in the event of an agricultural or environmental attack, receive more attention during this year’s discussion.

• My Delegation presented a working paper outlining our national efforts to promote coordination and cooperation among different agencies and sectors within the U.S. government in order to respond effectively to such an event.

• As a reminder, that working paper includes some proposed draft language for the Final Document of the Review Conference. We look forward to receiving feedback from other delegations in order to clarify any issues or refine that proposal.

• As the United Kingdom pointed out, the UN General Assembly has designated 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health. Therefore, we would be particularly supportive of devoting additional attention to plant health issues in next year’s MX.

• Mr. President, we continue to believe that there is more we can do at this MSP and that we do not need to delay decisions another two years until the RevCon on MX4 issues on which there is widespread consensus.

• Specifically, the MSP could welcome the guidelines proposed by South Africa and note that States Parties may consider using them on a provisional basis, while Parties continue to shape their details and work toward formal adoption, as suggested by the United Kingdom.

• The MSP could also take note of the support for establishing a database to facilitate assistance under the framework of Article VII and operationalizing that database, another proposal for which there seems to be broad support.

• Finally, the MSP could welcome the information shared by States Parties with respect to their rapid response capabilities, including their mobile biomedical laboratories as well as emergency medical teams, and invite the next Meeting of Experts to consider what role these national assets could play in an international response under Article VII.
While we acknowledge that there are differences of opinion among States Parties about the authority of Meetings of States Parties to make decisions, we do not believe that any of these modest suggestions are an overreach for what this meeting is able to do.