Mr President,

Austria aligns itself with the Statement to be delivered by the European Union, outlining not only priorities of the European Union, but also its contributions to implement our Convention on the ground. In our national capacity we wish to underline the following four points:

First, Austria remains fully committed to the biological and toxin weapons convention. The threat posed by biological and toxin weapons deserves more attention by the international community and we fully share the view of the challenges mentioned in the opening statement of the UN High Representative. The Convention needs to remain responsive to new scientific developments. It is in the security interest of all to uphold the global norm against biological weapons and further strengthen it, including by promoting its universalisation and further strengthen its implementation. In this context, Austria underlines the importance to enhance national implementation and compliance, promote confidence-building and transparency measures such as peer-reviews, voluntary visits and other initiatives, facilitate cooperation on science and technology, operationalise Article V consultative provisions and Article VII provisions on assistance, response and preparedness, as well as to promote universal adherence to the Convention.

Second, Austria believes that the comprehensive meetings of experts agreed by the 2016 Review Conference have prooved to be a useful tool to substantively strenghten our Convention. We thank the coordinators for their commitment and tireless efforts and look forward to continue the meeting of experts next year.

Third, sound finances are the fundamental basis to allow to hold our meetings as agreed by state parties and to allow the ISU to conduct its work. Austria welcomes the financial measures adopted 2018. However, these measures did not solve all finance issues. The underlying prerequisite is that all state parties pay their assessed contributions in full and on time. Austria therefore fully supports keeping contributions and the implementation of financial measures, including potential adjustments, under review.

Fourth, given the financial challenges Austria supports further measures to increase efficiency in our deliberations. We therefore wish to echo others that with a thorough preparatory process, allocating two weeks for our deliberations in the Review Conference will be sufficient time to take the necessary decisions to guide our work from 2021 onwards.

In closing, allow me Mr. President to thank you for your excellent preparatory work. We also wish to express our appreciation to the ISU, for their examplary work, both in the traditional secretarial support but also for providing assistance to countries to allow enhancing the implementation of our Convention globally.