STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN ON EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE UNIVERSALITY OF THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION (BWC)

Delivered by the Director General for International Cooperation, Ambassador Moses Akol Ajawin, to the MEETING OF STATE PARTIES TO BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

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United Nations

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In the field of biological weapons, there is almost no prospect of detecting a pathogen until it has been used in an attack.

---Barton Gellman

Mr. Giorjinisky, Chairman of the 2018 Annual Meeting of State Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

A very good afternoon to you!

On behalf of my country, its people, our president Salva Kiir Mayardit, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Honorable Nhial Deng Nhial, my colleague Honorable Dr. Alma Jervase Yak, chairperson of the Sub-committee on Bilateral Relations in the Transitional National Legislative Assembly and member of Parliamentarians for Global Action, and on my own behalf, kindly allow me to express great appreciation to the organizers for affording the Republic of South Sudan an opportunity to attend and address this august meeting of state parties to the Biological Weapons Convention in this beautiful city. I would equally wish to profoundly thank the Peace and Democracy Program of Parliamentarians for Global Action and its director without whose magnanimous support the South Sudanese delegation would not have been able to attend this important annual gathering. I would also like to thank state parties to the Biological Weapons convention for kindly allowing our delegation to intrude into one of their most important annual events. I will be remised if I did not acknowledge the efforts of several friends of South Sudan who have tapped us gently on the shoulder several times in the recent past, urging us to accelerate the process of acceding to the Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Chemical Weapons Convention under the auspices of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and, of course, the all-important Biological Weapons Convention whose state parties are assembled here today.
Mr. Chairman

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Spectacular advances in technology and mass movements of people have reduced the world we live in today to a mere global neighborhood in which no state can singlehandedly protect its citizens and soil without the collaborative efforts of the entire neighborhood. Newcomers to this global neighborhood, such as South Sudan, are particularly vulnerable, and are in dire need of bilateral and multilateral agreements to complement their national efforts aimed at confronting security challenges within and outside state borders. Therefore, cognizant of the existential imperative to rid the world of weapons of mass-destruction, including biological weapons, South Sudan has taken official measures to accede to all conventions that seek to ban the production, stockpiling, and the use of weapons of mass-destruction. As the first step toward that noble goal, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of South Sudan in August 2017 approved the accession of the country to both the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the 1997 Oslo Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and the Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. The Transitional National Legislative Assembly (Parliament) remains seized with the matter of ratification of the conventions. The Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in our Parliament has exerted concerted efforts to accelerate the process of ratifying the conventions. The presence of my colleague Dr. Alma Jervase Yak in this meeting today is a strong testament to my country’s commitment to global efforts to rid the world of weapons of mass-destruction, particularly biological weapons.

Mr. Chairman

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to reiterate to this august gathering the very assurances we made to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) last December that the Republic of South Sudan has no reason to sit on the fence while the community of nations labors tirelessly to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction. In fact, South Sudan has every reason to be at the forefront of the quest for the achievement of the universality of the ban on all kinds of weapons of mass destruction, including biological weapons. As the world’s youngest state, South Sudan
stands to gain most from multilateral conventions that prohibit the use of weapons of mass destruction. As a land-locked country with porous borders with six other countries, South Sudan is mindful of possible illegal activities by non-state actors who have easy access to easily weaponized pathogens which can maim and kill large numbers of people. As the renowned American journalist Barton Gellman notes poignantly that “there is almost no prospect of detecting a pathogen until it has been used in an attack,” it is our collective responsibility not to wait until such an attack occurs.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to reaffirm South Sudan’s unequivocal commitment to the achievement of the universality of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). It is our conviction that our participation as observers in this important meeting of state parties to the Biological Weapons Convention will immensely accelerate the processes of South Sudan’s accession to the three existential conventions. It is our expectation also that the achievement of the universality of the Biological Weapons Convention by state actors will greatly enhance national and global efforts to counteract the insidious, asymmetric trans-boundary warfare currently waged by non-state actors in many of our own backyards.

I thank you for your kind attention!

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