

Missão Permanente do Brasil junto à Organização das Nações Unidas e demais Organismos Internacionais em Genebra

Reunião dos Estados Partes da Convenção para a Proibição das Armas Biológicas de 2017

Debate Geral (item 5 da agenda) – Intervenção do Brasil

Mr. Chair,

Let me first congratulate you on your appointment to chair the 2017 Meeting of the States Parties of the Biological Weapons Convention. You can count on my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Brazil attaches great importance to the BWC and is committed to achieving a significant consensual outcome during the course of this meeting. We will constructively participate in discussions and will do our utmost to bridge positions so that we can adopt a program of work that ensures the continuity and consolidation of our commitments towards the implementation and improvement of the Convention. The breath of our engagement is clearly reflected in the size and composition of the Brazilian delegation, which includes experts from a wide range of sectors of Government, both military and civilian.

The BWC is a key element of the international disarmament and security architecture. It was the first treaty to comprehensively ban an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, which led the way to other groundbreaking instruments, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty.

However, its novelty has had its price, since at the time it was not possible to endow the BWC with a robust structure to support its implementation, be it a full-fledged organization, such as the OPCW, be it a normative relationship with an already existing institution, such as the IAEA-safeguards mandated by the TPNW.

The efforts to correct those original shortcomings have produced some results, but far less than we would have desired. The incapacity of the Eighth Review Conference to agree on a way forward has left us in a difficult situation. While we should not let the meaningful debates and important contributions made last year go to waste, we can also not expect to follow through on the very same positions and hope for different results. In this sense, openness and

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flexibility will be needed from all delegations if we expect to move our work forward.

Mr. Chair,

We consider that the elements proposed in the joint working paper by Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, which draws upon the work of last year, is a suitable base for our deliberations. We also welcome the working papers presented by Cuba and the Non-Aligned Movement, which contribute essential elements for the discussions ahead. The challenge we have before us is how to find a compromise between the different priorities of Member States in a balanced, equitable manner.

We have now a second chance to examine key issues related to the implementation and effectiveness of the BTWC and to agree on a way forward. These issues include, in our view, the need for progress towards the institutionalization of the Convention, the lack of a verification mechanism and the increasing demand for transparency and cooperation for the peaceful uses of biotechnology.

We regret there is still no consensus to resume the negotiation of a verification Protocol to the Convention, suspended in 2001. We believe the BTWC should be able to establish effective and non-discriminatory measures to verify compliance and deal with violations to its provisions. We will continue to call for a process leading to such a mechanism and understand that reviews, national implementation and other partial and voluntary measures are no substitute to it.

Mr. Chair,

Allow me to comment on other issues. Regarding the review of developments in science and technology, it is important to stress the need to guarantee access to technological progress in the biological area for non-proscribed uses. We agree that States Parties should take action to ensure a comprehensive and coherent oversight of life sciences work, provided that such concerted effort does not jeopardize the transfer of technology, materials and equipment for peaceful purposes, thereby hampering the economic and technological development of States Parties. Efforts to mitigate risks of accidental release or misuse of biological microorganisms should be proportionate to the risks assessed and should not restrict scientific research for peaceful purposes.

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We understand that a scientific code of conduct should be an important guideline for countries willing to voluntarily adapt them to their national reality. Due to the sensitive nature of dual use items, Brazil also holds the view that obligations on export control in the biological field should derive from universal and legally-binding instruments. We therefore consider that proposals to discuss export controls in the context of the BWC should be aimed at a multilateral, non-discriminatory and legally-binding export control regime under the framework of the Convention.

Mr. Chair,

Working towards the full implementation of the provisions of Article X is a necessary element of any package to be agreed at this meeting. Consideration of Article X will require not only dedicated discussions on cooperation, but should permeate all topics of discussion, including science and technology, national implementation and assistance. We must ensure that decisions adopted to address the threat of biological weapons will not result in obstacles to international cooperation, trade and peaceful research in the field of biological sciences.

With regard to assistance and preparedness, I would like recall the importance of approaching this issue through the principles of international solidarity and collective security, which are also reflected in Article VII. I would highlight the importance of working in tandem with other relevant international organizations, such as the WHO and the FAO, in responding to any biological crisis. Malicious use of non-lethal biological weapons, aimed at economic sabotage of countries' economies, must also be dealt with by the Convention, since they incur in grievous social and economic costs, to which developing States are particularly vulnerable.

Brazil attributes a high priority to the protection against CBRN threats, which must be dealt with in a holistic manner. This August, Brazil officially opened its "Regional Training Centre for Assistance and Protection Against Chemical Weapons". The Centre will provide assistance and protection in emergencies as well as specialized training and capacity-building. Inter-ministerial discussions on our national biodefense policy are currently underway in Brazil, and, as per the BWC itself, they could also draw upon the more advanced framework for chemical weapons.

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Mr. Chair,

Based on the last year's stalemate and considering the international and geopolitical contexts have not improved significantly since then, we recognize conditions are not ideal for major breakthroughs. We must not, however, let pessimism undermine our resolve to meaningfully strengthen our landmark Convention, more relevant by the day as the pace of scientific and technologic development picks up speed for both vitally important social and economic human development as well as the life-threatening non-peaceful uses. Instead, we must seize the opportunity to do our share for the common good and improve it.