Mr Chair,

Please allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the chair of this Meeting of States Parties (MSP). My delegation looks forward to supporting your efforts to achieve a successful outcome at the end of this week.

The Biological Weapons Convention remains a key pillar of the efforts to promote disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Convention not only sets a fundamental norm against using toxins and living organisms as means of warfare, it also facilitates global efforts to promote the peaceful uses of the life sciences. We must ensure that the Convention remains effective and global in its reach.

Efforts to ensure universal adherence and full implementation of the Convention by all States Parties are key tasks. This requires that States Parties continue to engage actively in these efforts. Norway welcomes the adoption of an intersessional programme of work. It is our hope that the Meetings of Experts remain constructive and forward-looking, and that they help us achieve further progress in the lead-up to the 2021 Review Conference.

Mr Chair,

Financial stability is important for ensuring progress in the work of the Convention. We are glad to see that the financial situation has improved somewhat following the measures adopted last year. We nevertheless urge all States Parties to pay their contributions in full and on time to ensure the continued work and effective functioning of the Convention.

Norway attaches great importance to Article X of the Convention. States Parties may need assistance and advice in strengthening their national capacities and fulfilling their international commitments. Cooperation among countries and mutual support are vital if we are to be able to respond to any outbreaks of disease, whether natural or intentional. In 2019 Norway is intensifying its cooperation with the Implementation Support Unit (ISU), and will provide financial support for a three-year period. Our support is aimed at strengthening the implementation of Article X, building human capacities through South-South cooperation, enhancing biological safety and security, and contributing to the peaceful use of beneficial technologies in developing countries.

Finally, Mr Chair, Norway firmly believes in gender equality and encourages States Parties to take gender considerations into account in all policy areas. We also encourage diversity of participation in disarmament, as we believe this makes us more effective and will lead to better outcomes. We were very pleased to co-host the first ever side event on gender in the BWC context in August, and we encourage all States Parties to seek to further develop our common understanding on the ways in which gender is relevant in the context of the BWC.

By adopting an approach of this kind, the BWC community will enable itself to develop practical measures for the further strengthening of our Convention. Norway remains committed to doing its part in this endeavour.

Thank you, Mr Chair.