EU Statement

Meeting of States Parties

Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

Budgetary and financial matters

Geneva, 4-7 December 2018

Mr Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

We would like to reiterate our deep concern over the financial situation of the BTWC which is becoming increasingly critical. The accumulated non- and late payments by a number of States Parties are putting progress to date and future operation of the Convention at risk. This year’s Meeting of States Parties had to be shortened and the staff of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) continues to be faced with uncertainty about their future contracts despite the excellent work they are doing. This is simply not acceptable.

It is paramount that all States comply with their financial obligations to enable the convening of meetings and the continued full operation of the ISU. Once again, we urge those States who have not yet done so, to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time and to settle their outstanding arrears without further delay. This is the only lasting solution to guarantee the financial stability of the Convention and to realise the potential of the current intersessional programme which we have jointly agreed.

* Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
In the meantime, the Meeting of States Parties must recognise its responsibility and take necessary measures with respect to budgetary and financial matters with a view to ensuring the proper implementation of the intersessional programme, as mandated at the Meeting of States Parties in 2017. In this context, we appreciate the work you have carried out, in cooperation with the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and in consultation with all States Parties, to identify possible short- and longer-term measures to improve financial predictability and sustainability, also taking into account lessons learned from other conventions.

We are of the view that any measure must be implemented in a way that does not decrease political pressure on States with arrears to fulfil their financial obligations. While work must continue on various options to improve the financial situation, we are ready to consider, as an exceptional measure, a number of options such as a contingency provision of 15% starting from the 2020 cost estimate or the establishment of a temporary voluntary Reserve Fund to ensure adequate financial liquidity at the beginning of the year.

As recalled in your information paper, the ISU does not only act as the secretariat of the BTWC meetings, but carries out a number of substantive tasks as mandated by States Parties. We should ensure that the important work of the ISU continues.

We appreciate the fact that several States Parties, including five EU Member States, have already paid their assessed contributions for 2019. We hope that these advance payments can be used to plan for meetings already in the first half of 2019 and to extend and pay ISU staff contracts. We encourage all States Parties, should their national budgetary rules so allow, to make similar pre-payments with a view to improving cash flow.

All States Parties to the BTWC have an obligation to ensure the full and timely payment of annual assessed contributions. Failure to do so undermines the viability and effectiveness of the Convention. We stand ready to consider options to resolve the Convention’s long-standing financial challenges including measures designed to incentivise all States Parties to fulfil their financial obligations. Measures such as the suspension of voting rights and office holder positions could be introduced in line with the financial rules of other disarmament treaties, and will have to be considered in the short term if the situation does not improve.

Thank you, Mr Chairman