Ireland National Statement

Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

2018 Meeting of States Parties

Ambassador Michael Gaffey,

Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations and Other Organisations in Geneva

04 December 2018

Check against delivery
Chair,

Ireland aligns itself fully with the statement (to be)/delivered by the European Union.

I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Chair of this meeting and thank you for your leadership at this challenging time for the functioning of the BTWC. You are assured of my delegation’s continued strong support.

Chair,

Ireland regards the BTWC as a pivotal part in the global community’s efforts to attain a world free from WMD. As the first multilateral disarmament treaty banning an entire category of weapons, it has set out a path for prohibition instruments for other such weapons, including the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The BTWC brings benefits that reach beyond the disarmament framework, and is inextricably linked to many international programmes, partnerships and initiatives for disease monitoring, detection, control and prevention.

We are all aware that biological threats do not discriminate between victims in our increasingly interconnected world and that borders will not of themselves stop the spread of harmful diseases. Employing efforts to ensure effective disease monitoring, detection, control and prevention are therefore vital, and we would strongly encourage those who are not yet members of this Convention to join immediately. We must remain steadfast in our commitment to uphold the international norm against the development, possession, or use of biological weapons, and we must continue to work to strengthen the implementation and effectiveness of our Convention.
Chair,

This Convention is a key element of our collective security. Our priority now should be to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and that we make all efforts to support and strengthen it.

Ireland is committed to working to improve and strengthen existing mechanisms, so as to build global confidence in compliance under this Convention.

Ireland believes that fuller participation by all States Parties in the annual CBM exchange would represent a significant step towards strengthening confidence and compliance with the provisions of the Convention.

Chair,

Advances in biological sciences and biotechnology are occurring at a rapid pace. Many of these advances bring added benefits to society and contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, the dual-use possibilities of biological agents and toxins require us to ensure that the inherent risks associated with these items are controlled carefully.

The development of microbial products is no longer confined to organisations and institutions compliant with international norms. In this age of rapid advancements, the equipment and means required to develop potentially lethal pathogens can be purchased with ease, leading to a rise in DIY science and its consequent risks.

Ensuring compliance with the Convention goes hand in hand with preventing the acquisition of WMD by non-State actors. We should not become complacent, and should strengthen the resolve of the global community to adhere to UN Security Council Resolution 1540. The potential consequences of an accidental or purposeful release of pathogens should be enough to galvanise the international community to greater action under the Convention.
Chair,

We remain committed to the implementation of Article X and will continue to support initiatives and projects aimed at capacity-building in the areas of infectious disease detection, surveillance, diagnosis and containment. The *First Annual Global Forum on Scientific Advances Important to the BWC* offered opportunities for knowledge sharing under the Convention, and we hope that further opportunities for knowledge sharing under the provisions of Article X occur throughout the remainder of this intersessional programme. We also hope that the Article X database, launched in 2017, will more readily facilitate interactions between States Parties offering and seeking support or assistance, and encourage its use.

Chair,

Ireland was pleased to participate in the BTWC meeting of experts which took place in August and we welcome the many substantive working documents which were presented during the course of this meeting.

It is unfortunate that financial issues now throw into doubt the future of this intersessional programme, and the effective functioning of the Convention itself. Timely payment of annual assessed contributions in full by the States Parties is the only guarantee of the sustainability of the BTWC process. We very much regret the current financial situation which has arisen in part due to non-payment of assessed contributions by some States Parties. However, we remain confident that there is sufficient political will to ensure a satisfactory outcome that will serve to strengthen implementation of the Convention for future generations.

As the pace of advancement in life sciences and technologies continues to increase, the Convention’s relevance to ensuring that these advances are used for the good of humanity is more valid than ever before.

Thank you.