The United Kingdom aligns itself with the statement to be made later by the European Union.

As the originator of the BTWC in 1968, the UK maintains a keen interest in ensuring that the Convention is global in its reach, and that its prohibitions continue to be effective. We are determined that the world be free from the threat of biological weapons, and that the Convention remain the keystone of the global architecture to deter and prevent the misuse of the life sciences for hostile purposes.

Our primary aim this week must be to address the fragile financial situation of the Convention. This MSP has a mandate to manage the intersessional programme, including taking financial and budgetary measures. We see the immediate impact of this situation in the shortening of this meeting of States Parties. The lack of certainty for the staff of the ISU is deeply unsatisfactory.

Mr Chair, you have worked hard to help delegations understand why the Convention is in such a precarious state, and to outline possible responses, which this delegation fully supports.

Let us be under no illusion, though, about the main cause of this situation: that is the systemic non-payment of dues by certain States Parties. We will look at all measures to prevent the collapse of the current intersessional programme and the loss of the ISU, both of which
would undermine the Convention. But nothing can excuse States Parties from paying their dues, on time and in full.

There are also important matters of substance to discuss at this MSP. The constructive interactions between States Parties’ technical experts at the Meetings of Experts in August were very encouraging. We also appreciated the keen interest shown by many States Parties in the UK’s Working Papers. We hope that the 2019 and 2020 MXs will be even more interactive and productive.

As the distinguished delegate from the Russian Federation has already mentioned, we present a joint Working Paper, entitled ‘Elements for an effective Article VII response’, at this MSP. This is one area where there is much common ground among States Parties; we hope we can build on this in the remainder of the intersessional programme. We are willing to work with our fellow Depositaries and other States Parties on such practical cooperation, where feasible, to strengthen implementation of our Convention.

There are two other issues that I should like to mention briefly: Article X, and education and awareness.

First, I would like to highlight the substantial contribution that the work of the Global Partnership makes to implementing Article X, and would draw delegations’ attention to the working paper submitted by Canada on behalf of the Global Partnership. This paper provides further examples of how various projects by partnership members continue to give effect to the full implementation of Article X.
Second, we have regularly highlighted the importance of biosecurity education and awareness raising. The UK and Canada have previously funded the development of educational material, which is freely available in several UN languages on the ISU website. More recently, we have funded an open on-line learning course, which draws from this material. This project will be the focus of a side event, which I am glad to host on Thursday morning. I hope that many of you will attend.

To conclude, let me reiterate our key priority this week: to set the Convention on a sounder and more predictable financial basis. That will ensure that our meetings can take place as planned and that the vital work of the ISU can continue without interruption and destabilising uncertainty. You can be assured of my delegation’s full support in that endeavour.

Thank you.