Deputy Minister
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honour for me to address you on the occasion of the Regional Workshop for Eastern Europe and Central Asia entitled ‘Preparing for the Eighth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention. This workshop represents the first in a series of four events under EU Council Decision CFSP/2016/51 in support of the BWC. I am grateful to the European Union for financing this crucial activity and commend the Government of Kazakhstan for hosting this important workshop, which will contribute towards preparing for the Eighth Review Conference.

I am privileged to have been nominated as the President-Designate of the Eighth Review Conference of the BWC that will convene in Geneva, Switzerland from 7 to 25 November 2016. It is in that capacity that I am making this opening statement today.

Let me start by emphasizing that the Review Conference will be decisive in shaping the mid-term perspective of the Convention. Important decisions with respect to the future trajectory of the BWC will be discussed. It is therefore of utmost importance that we all prepare in the best possible manner in order to ensure that the BWC stays relevant also in the future. Therefore in early June I had a bilateral meeting with the UN Secretary-General in New York and invited him to personally open the Eighth Review Conference.

At this juncture it is worthwhile to recall that the BWC was the first treaty to outlaw an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. More than 41 years have passed since the entry into force of the BWC in 1975 and a lot has been accomplished since then. Biological weapons have in essence disappeared from today’s military inventories and policy makers have excluded them as viable battlefield options from their security concepts and military doctrines. Moreover, no one would seriously question the grave illegitimacy of biological weapons as a means of warfare today.

However, there is no time for complacency and we must attach high importance to the BWC, not least because the rapid advances in science and technology have lowered the barriers for preparing biological weapons and non-state actors, as well as, terrorist groups also try and acquire and use them Consequently the threat from biological weapons is real and is not that we should ignore.

So far 174 states, almost 90 percent of all states, have joined this treaty, which clearly underlines its significance as one of the fundamental pillars of multilateral disarmament. The Hungarian Presidency of the Review Conference considers promoting the universalization of the
Convention as one of its main tasks. I will share with you more details on that tomorrow morning in the first panel.

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As you will hear, States Parties agreed upon an innovative approach to the preparations for this year’s Review Conference at the 2015 Meeting of States Parties. A first session of the Preparatory Committee was successfully held in Geneva from 26 to 27 April, and the Preparatory Committee will again resume its work during 8 to 12 August. I was pleased about the outcome of the April meeting where several necessary procedural issues for the efficient planning and preparation of the Review Conference in November were agreed upon. Moreover, States Parties presented a number of concrete and interesting proposals for consideration by the Review Conference.

This workshop represents a unique occasion in the preparations for the Eighth Review Conference. It provides the chance for States Parties to present their proposals to a wider audience and to obtain feedback and further suggestions. At the same time, it enables States Parties to acquaint themselves with ideas and suggestions already made by other States Parties. Moreover, the workshop also offers an excellent opportunity to identify issues for the Review Conference from a regional perspective.

In conclusion, I strongly encourage you to make best use of this event. I am convinced that this workshop will help to further shape existing proposals and lead to new ones. The Eighth Review Conference represents a unique opportunity for strengthening the BWC and related expectations for it are high. I remain optimistic that States Parties will find constructive and innovative solutions for making this world a safer place. I look forward to fruitful discussions over the next two days and very much value your views and suggestions for the way ahead.

Thank you.