Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

Meeting of States Parties

Geneva, 3 December 2019

National Statement by Ireland

Chair,

Ireland aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the European Union.

To begin, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Chair of this meeting. We are particularly grateful for France’s efforts to put the Convention on a solid and sustainable financial foundation.

Ireland is also grateful to the Chairs of the Meetings of Experts and to the staff of the Implementation Support Unit.

Chair,

We congratulate Tanzania on its ratification of the Convention earlier this year, and we strongly encourage those States which are not yet members to join this important Convention. Since 1972, the BTWC has established an unequivocal prohibition on a full category of WMD, and
has illuminated a pathway towards the prohibition instruments for other weapons of mass
destruction, including Chemical and Nuclear Weapons. Likewise, we appreciate the role played
by the BTWC ISU in ensuring a broad-focused discussion at the recent New York Conference
on a Middle East Zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

Chair,

As the pace of advancement in life sciences and technologies continues to grow rapidly, the
effective functioning and implementation of the Convention, is more important than ever.

In considering ways to strengthen the BTWC, we must start by recognising that - when
compared with other similar regimes - our Convention is institutionally weak. Verification
greatly contributes to the effectiveness of any disarmament and non-proliferation instrument
and the absence of a formal inspection system and enforcement mechanism may limit the
efficacy of the BTWC.

We welcome the U.N. Secretary-General’s focus on the need to ensure capacity to conduct
independent investigations of the alleged use of biological weapons. While we acknowledge
the lack of consensus on the issue of verification within the Convention, my delegation remains
committed to encouraging all States Parties to continue to examine its potential.

Ireland welcomes the many substantive working documents which informed the Meetings of
Experts this year. We also welcome the useful Summary reports of the Meeting of Experts,
including recommendations, conclusions and proposals for *Strengthening National
Implementation*. We believe that there is value in further considering implementation of these
proposals, including the review of information requested in CBM forms, and the establishment
of an exchange platform for voluntary transparency measures.

Chair,

The presence of WMD offers nothing to international peace and security and the risk that non-
state actors acquire these weapons is an issue of serious concern. 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. We should strengthen the resolve of the global community to adhere to UN Security Council Resolution 1540.

Chair,

Ireland is also committed to working to ensure the widest possible representation in meetings of the BTWC, including with regard to gender balance and equitable geographical representation. Furthermore, we encourage the adoption of a gender lens in considering relevant substantive issues of our work. UNIDIR’s recent publication, *Missing Links*, has shown how gender roles can have an impact on exposure to biological agents and access to information related to public health crises. An understanding of these perspectives can support us in the development of effective response and assistance strategies.

Chair,

As we look towards the Ninth Review Conference of the BTWC in 2021, we must renew our efforts to facilitate the Convention in ensuring that advances in life sciences and technologies are used for the good of humanity.

Thank you.