



EU key messages

Reaching consensus on an intersessional programme

Meeting of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

Geneva, 4-8 December 2017

Mr Chairman,

I have the honour to deliver some key messages on behalf of the European Union with regard to the intersessional programme.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with these messages.

The European Union considers that the primary objective of this meeting is to agree on an intersessional programme that would strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and enhance its implementation and universalisation. We recall that the Eighth Review Conference last November gave us a mandate to make progress on substance and process before the 2021 Review Conference, with a view to reaching consensus on an intersessional process. We would like to thank for your continued efforts in this regard.

We believe that an intersessional programme should be substantive and address issues of importance to all States Parties in order to reach consensus on a balanced draft Decision. We should focus on those questions which enjoy the broadest support among States Parties and have the potential to benefit all of them. We should not miss the opportunity to exchange experiences and good practices on how to implement the BTWC and learn about the possibilities for international cooperation. There is a general interest to better understand the rapid developments in life sciences and biotechnology which can bring new opportunities, but also proliferation risks. It would be useful to discuss how to strengthen the level of biosafety

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

and biosecurity, raise stakeholder awareness, and improve preparedness, response and assistance.

At the same time, the fragile financial situation of the Convention will inevitably determine the scope of an intersessional process. It is important that all States comply with their financial obligations in full and on time to ensure that sufficient funds are available for the organisation of intersessional meetings and for the functioning of the Implementation Support Unit whose work is crucial for the implementation and universalisation of the Convention.

The European Union has advocated the following six topics for an intersessional programme, either as intersessional topics, or through dedicated working groups, or both:

(i) national implementation and compliance, including information sharing on national legislation and implementation measures to control over pathogenic microorganisms, biosafety and biosecurity standards, engagement with non-governmental stakeholders.

(ii) further work on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) to provide reassurance on compliance by means of information exchanges and enhancing transparency, including increasing the relevance of CBM forms and conducting voluntary peer review initiatives.

(iii) assistance and cooperation under Article VII taking into account the pressing capacity building needs as regards responding to outbreaks of infectious diseases.

(iv) science and technology in order to review relevant developments in a more systematic way and assess their impact, positive and negative, on the BTWC.

(v) review of the Consultative Committee procedure making it possible for States Parties to resort to consultation and cooperation bilaterally and multilaterally, as set out in Article V.

(vi) universalisation, including the adoption of an action plan and dedicated sessions to promote universal adherence to the BTWC.

We welcome the paper put forward by the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Russian Federation as a good basis for reaching consensus on an intersessional process. We encourage all States Parties to demonstrate the necessary flexibility and support your efforts to achieve this goal.

Thank you, Mr Chairman