



General Statement

by

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**Meeting of the High Contracting Parties of the Convention on the Prohibition
of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological)
and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction**

4-8 December 2017

Mr. Chairman,

First of all, let me congratulate you on assuming the chairmanship of this conference and let me also assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation in your efforts to make this Meeting of States Parties a successful one.

Germany fully aligns itself with the position of the European Union.

Mr. Chair,

In the field of biological and toxin weapons member states are currently facing three main challenges:

First, an incredibly fast advancement of scientific and technological developments in the area of the life sciences: new methods of genetic manipulation of biological agents, new technologies to spread or preserve them, easy access to scientific findings via the internet to name but a few. In many cases, countries are only just beginning to grasp the extent and the consequences of these developments, and struggle with ways and means to channel them in the right direction without curtailing the freedom of research.

Second, non-state actors have emerged as a challenge to peace and security which is here to stay. And we can observe that such actors are looking for new and even more dangerous weapons to spread their terror. The deliberate use of biological pathogens is one dangerous option which we as states have to prevent. Even the unintended outbreaks of diseases like the Ebola crisis have shown us the vulnerability of all our modern societies. It is for this reason that Germany, since 2013, cooperates with countries in Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Europe in the framework of its Biosecurity Programme.

Finally, universalisation of the convention remains a task for us all. Germany welcomes Samoa as the 179th State Party. However, quite a number of countries have not joined the convention, and some of them may still pursue the development of biological weapons.

Therefore, we have to ask ourselves: is the BTWC up to these challenges? What have we done to make this a universally implemented convention? Germany has always stated that universalisation efforts need to go hand in hand with progress in the BTWC-implementation process as such. National and collective efforts, however, must be complemented by an adequate and effective intersessional process.

Mr. Chair,

It is our joint responsibility to live up to the mandate given to this Meeting of States Parties by the Review Conference: a focused and effective intersessional work programme should enable States Parties to monitor relevant developments and develop suitable recommendations to be considered and acted upon at the annual meetings and Review Conferences. In this context, the proposal for key elements of a possible ISP developed jointly by the United Kingdom, United States of America and Russia is a good basis for the way forward.

Mr. Chair,

Germany would like to emphasize the importance of sound national implementation, appropriate and thorough legislation and effective national export controls. In addition, our priorities remain the improvement of confidence building measures, the continuation of the peer review process and strengthening the UNSGM.

The Confidence Building Measures are so far the only substantive commitment agreed by all States Parties to the Convention to enable building confidence by transparency. To maintain and improve the value of the trust-building capacities of the CBMs, an in-depth discussion of the existing and new CBM forms is required during the Intersessional process 2018 to 2020, taking into account the numerous working papers on this issue.

The Peer Review activities undertaken so far across regional groups have evidently demonstrated that they are a useful tool to improve confidence in national implementation by increased transparency and can help to identify implementation gaps and national needs. Germany remains an active supporter of this transparency measure.

Finally, strengthening the UNSGM remains crucial. We have no other mechanism to investigate and therefore verify any potential deliberate incident with biological weapons. The German government is continuing its efforts to strengthen this valuable instrument and will remain actively engaged in adding to the scientific capacities of the UNSGM on a long-term basis. We believe that, as the custodian of the UNSGM, UNODA is in the best position to steer and coordinate UNSGM activities, but it requires adequate resources to do so.

Mr. Chair,

I would also like to thank the staff of the Implementation Support Unit for their tireless efforts, support and professionalism under most challenging work circumstances, not least because of precarious work contracts due to outstanding financial contributions – a situation that needs to be improved immediately. We would like to once again call upon all States Parties to fulfil their financial commitments on time and in full.

To sum up, we have quite a number of tasks ahead of us in the coming days. The success of this meeting will be measured by its substantial outcome. Achieving this goal may require creative solutions and flexibility, but I am convinced that it is not an impossible one. Germany stands ready to contribute to all efforts in order to reach that goal.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.