2019 Meeting of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

Statement by Canada – General Debate

Delivered by Leslie Norton
Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament
Geneva, 3 December 2019

La réunion des États parties à la Convention d’interdiction des armes biologiques et à toxines de 2019

Déclaration du Canada – Débat général

Prononcée par Leslie Norton
Ambassadrice et Représentant permanente auprès des Nations Unies et de la Conférence du désarmement
Genève, le 3 décembre 2019
Mr. Chair,

I wish to assure you of my delegation’s support throughout this Meeting of States Parties. In addition, I wish to commend the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) for another year of outstanding work.

There are a number of elements concerning the functioning of the Convention we would like to highlight over this last year. First, the 2019 Meeting of Experts was a success. The meetings allowed States Parties to explore key aspects of the Convention at a more technical level, whether related to cooperation and assistance, scientific and technological developments, national implementation, preparedness or institutional strengthening. We look forward to the consideration this week of the factual reports from the Meeting of Experts and the lessons that we might draw from them in order to steer future Meetings of Experts.

While the 2018 MSP made real progress in establishing practices to better manage the financial situation of the BTWC, money issues still dog the Convention. States Parties that continue to be delinquent in paying their assessed contributions or making good on their arrears are compromising the integrity of the BTWC. Indeed, the length of this MSP was in doubt until September, due to lack of funds. This financial uncertainty threatens to overshadow the remainder of the intersessional process and the 2021 Review Conference.

With this in mind, we look forward to the 2021 Review Conference as a chance to address our collective and individual obligations under the BTWC, and to make decisions to guide the Convention’s work going forward. Canada will be flexible in order to achieve compromise on the length and timing of the Review Conference.

We are committed to strengthening the implementation of the Convention worldwide. Through the Weapons Threat Reduction Program, Canada has funded a number of recent initiatives such as:

- An Implementation Support Unit project to further develop an inter-agency cooperation framework to respond to the deliberate use of disease;
- Collaboration between the OIE, INTERPOL and FAO to build global resilience against agro-terrorism and agro-crime;
- Parliamentarians for Global Action which engages parliamentarians from Africa, the Caribbean, Central America and Asia to advance the universalization and implementation of the Convention and UN Security Council Resolution 1540; and
- The BTWC’s Working Capital Fund.

In addition, under the framework of the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, Canada and other participating members continue to make tangible contributions to international security through specific cooperation projects to prevent the proliferation of biological weapons, related materials and WMD in general.

Canada advocates for gender perspectives in disarmament, and for greater inclusion and diversity in the work of the BTWC. We are therefore pleased that the BTWC resolution at this year’s First Committee included a reference to equitable representation of women and men in the framework of the
Convention. It is a small but significant step to acknowledge the importance of equality in the implementation of the BTWC. More inclusion and greater diversity are assets in improving the functioning and effectiveness of the Convention.

To conclude, while we understand that there is debate among States Parties on which initiatives and aspects of the BTWC most require attention at this time, we emphasize that there is agreement among States Parties that the world must be free of biological and toxin weapons. It is the foundation of this Convention, gives purpose to our intersessional process, and our goal should be to see it reinforced at the 2021 Review Conference.

Thank you.