Opening Remarks for Ms Radha DAY
Officer in Charge, UNODA/Geneva Branch
Launch Event EU Council Decision 2019/97
in support of the Biological Weapons Convention
Palais des Nations, Room IX
18 March 2019, 15:00 hrs

Distinguished delegates,

European Union partners,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for joining us this afternoon to mark the launch of European Union Council Decision 2019/97 adopted on 21 January 2019 in support of the BWC. This Decision succeeds EU Council Decision 2016/51 and aims at building on its achievements and momentum created through its implementation. Today’s event aims at outlining the main elements of the new Decision and to showcase some of the achievements, best practices and lessons learned under the previous Decision.

But allow me to make some brief remarks, before the substantive presentations by the other panelists. At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation to Ambassador Stevens and to the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations for their steadfast support to all our activities and to this event. I would also like to convey our deepest gratitude to the European Union for its continued and invaluable support to the BWC. The newly-adopted Council Decision is the fifth EU initiative in support of the BWC since 2006. Since then, the EU has contributed nearly 10 million euros to support BWC implementation. This support has been instrumental for us to conduct our mandated work in service of BWC States Parties. We are immensely thankful to the EU for this.
These five EU instruments are among the most important tools available to UNODA to promote and strengthen the implementation of the BWC. This support has led to concrete progress in the universalization of the Convention, to intensive discussions on science and technology, and to the rollout of capacity development programmes for several States Parties. You will hear more from subsequent speakers about some of these activities, but let me mention a few highlights in these important areas of work from the implementation of the recently-concluded Council Decision.

Firstly, we saw a number of universalization activities that led to very important outcomes. For example, the Regional Universalization Workshop for the Pacific held in Fiji in July 2017, prompted the ratification of the BWC by Samoa in 2017 and Niue in 2018. In total, during the previous Decision’s implementation period, nine countries joined the BWC. You will hear more about the universalization efforts in the Pacific from Mr Vueti Kosoniu MAY, representing Fiji.

Secondly, science and technology discussions were also promoted under the previous Decision through five regional science and technology workshops. These workshops brought together life scientists, academics, and industry representatives to discuss the implications of scientific and technological advances for the BWC. Important thematic convergences were identified in the five regions where the workshops were held, which addressed directly the need raised in the UN Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament to explore in more detail the science and technology dimensions of disarmament, as well as its profound implications for peace and security. Today, you will hear from Ambassador Almojuela of the Philippines about the Regional Workshop for Asia, which was held in Manila last November.

Finally, but by no means less importantly, we also focused on building the capacity of nine selected States Parties to implement the BWC at the national level. This was achieved through the launching of “Extended Assistance Programmes”. The programmes focused on providing dedicated assistance in areas identified by States Parties as crucial to effectively implementing the BWC, in a range of fields including legislation, law
enforcement, institutional strengthening, and CBM preparation. Today we will hear about the experience of one of these nine States Parties through Ms Rasyidah ZAINAL, representing Malaysia, as well as the important outputs delivered through the assistance.

The new Council Decision builds on all these achievements through activities to continue promoting BWC universalization, building capacity in States Parties, and supporting the preparations of the Ninth Review Conference. You will learn more about the new Decision from the next speaker, Ms Ana Izar, UNODA’s Project Officer for the EU Council Decision.

In sum, thanks to the support provided by the EU, we have made, and will continue to make, important progress towards strengthening the foundations that underpin the success of the BWC: its effective implementation, universal adherence, and integrated coordination among all relevant stakeholders.

These collective steps are what will ultimately lead us to achieving our common goal of building a more secure, peaceful and safer world and reaching the objectives of the Secretary-General’s Disarmament Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you.