



Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)

**Meeting of the States Parties
Geneva, 4--7 December 2018**

General Debate

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Gianfranco Incarnato Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to warmly congratulate you on your appointment and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation for a successful outcome of this Meeting of the States Parties.

Italy aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. President,

Italy believes that the international community needs to invest more resources in the international architecture dealing with biological weapons. The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention is a fundamental component of this architecture, and every possible effort should be made to strengthen its regime and ensure its full and effective implementation.

In this regard, universalization of the BTWC remains one of Italy's top priorities. Therefore, we welcome the recent adhesions, which brought the membership to 182, and continue to call on States not yet party to the Convention to ratify or accede to it without delay.

Mr. President,

Italy is deeply concerned over the critical financial situation of the BTWC, that is putting at risk the current and future operation of the Convention. In order to fully and effectively implement the BTWC, we need financial predictability and sustainability for the meetings agreed by the States Parties and for the Implementation Support Unit (ISU). This year, unfortunately, the MSP has been shortened and the future of ISU staff contracts remains uncertain.

We deeply regret the accumulation of delayed or missed payments by some State Parties and call once again on all States Parties to abide by their financial obligations on time and in full.

Mr. President,

Italy commends the work that you have carried out, in cooperation with the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and in consultation with all States Parties, to identify possible short- and longer-term measures to improve the financial predictability and sustainability of the Convention, also taking into account lessons learned from other conventions.

In this framework, Italy is ready to consider, as an exceptional measure, a contingency provision of 15% starting from the 2020 cost estimate and the establishment of a temporary voluntary Reserve Fund to ensure adequate financial liquidity at the beginning of the year.

Further, we want to express our appreciation for the excellent job that the ISU has carried out so far and for its tailored and specialized support to the Convention. We believe it would be important to retain the current structure and regulatory framework of the ISU and, at the same time, to identify measures that can allow for stabilization of ISU staff contracts.

Mr. President,

The BTWC operates in a highly dynamic environment, characterized by fast-paced scientific and technological developments. In such a context, it is essential to allow the Convention to respond more rapidly to emerging needs and challenges. With this aim, a strong intersessional work programme is fundamental.

We appreciate the substantive work and discussions carried out by the Meetings of Experts in August, which usefully allowed for technical input by relevant international, regional and non-governmental organizations. Italy commends the respective Chairs for the suggestions they have formulated in order to achieve common understanding and for identifying possible outcomes that can constitute a basis for our discussions in subsequent intersessional meetings and then be considered as concrete actions in the Ninth Review Conference in 2021.

Italy believes that more efforts could be invested in strengthening implementation of BWC provisions relating to national preparedness and response, international cooperation and assistance in relation to art. VII and to art. X, and transparency. In particular, in order to identify possible mechanisms for the provision of assistance to State Parties confronted with art. VII emergencies, we believe it would be useful to further consider the French-Indian proposal to establish a database for assistance under art. VII, as well as the South African proposal on elaborating guidelines for a State Party intending to submit a request for assistance under the same article. Also, we deem important to identify concrete ways to strengthen each State Party's capability to respond rapidly and effectively to art. VII emergencies.

At the same time, Confidence-Building Measures are essential to promote the purposes of the BTWC. They help demonstrating compliance with its commitments and are key to increasing mutual trust and transparency. We support renewed efforts to increase participation in the CBMs process, and to allow States to make better use of the exchanged information. We are also open to discussing other potential means to foster transparency and facilitate the exchange of best practices.

Italy will further elaborate on these topics during the discussion under the Agenda Item dedicated to the consideration of the factual reports of the Meetings of Experts.

Finally, Mr. President,

Italy remains convinced that, to address the issues relevant for the BTWC, it is important to adopt a cooperative approach involving not only States, but also relevant international organizations, such as the WHO and the ICRC. The BTWC does not operate in a vacuum; its ties with other instruments that are fundamental for its effectiveness must be maintained and strengthened.

In this regard, Italy also continues to highly appreciate the contribution provided to our work by NGOs, academic institutions, biological and health research centres, which are fundamental sources of knowledge and expertise, and critical partners in BTWC implementation at both national and global levels.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.