



Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)
Meeting of Experts
Geneva, 13 August 2018

MX 3 - Strengthening National Implementation

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

Agenda item 4

Mr. Chair,

Italy aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity. With your permission, I will briefly touch on several points of the agenda at this time.

Mr. Chair,

Strengthening national implementation and preparedness is essential to implement the Convention, and in particular to effectively prevent and, if needed, respond to biological threats. In this regard, adequate legislative and regulatory frameworks are key. In Italy, exports and imports of micro-organisms and toxins are regulated in accordance with the EU Dual Use Regulation 388/2012. Further, on biosafety and security, we have adopted legislative measures relating to the improvement of workers' safety and health, and to the confined use of genetically modified microorganisms.

Italy considers exchanges in biological sciences and technology, including equipment and materials for peaceful purposes, a legitimate goal under the BTWC. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure that, in accordance with Article III, only activities for peaceful purposes not prohibited by the Convention are undertaken. For this reason, we are convinced that appropriate export controls are compatible with the provisions of Article X. It is our collective responsibility to guarantee that cooperation in biological sciences or in the economic and technological fields does not turn into unwanted assistance in the development of biological weapons.

We also believe that, similarly to other disarmament regimes, the provision of assistance, including through training and capacity-building activities, is fundamental for the establishment of effective national export systems or for their strengthening.

Mr Chair,

Transparency and the exchange of good practices on national implementation are of great importance in the context of the BTWC. In this regard, the role of Confidence-Building Measures is essential. CBMs help demonstrating compliance with BTWC commitments, and are key to increasing mutual trust and transparency. In addition, transparency provides the chance to develop international, regional and bilateral cooperation, by identifying areas where assistance in capacity-building may be needed, while fully respecting national sovereignty. For this reason, we support renewed efforts to increase participation in the CBMs process and to allow States to make better use of the exchanged information.

Based on the positive experiences of some States Parties on voluntary peer reviews, we also deem it useful to assess the potential for such initiatives to further foster transparency and facilitate the exchange of best practices.

Finally, Mr Chair, Italy remains deeply concerned by the increasing risk of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of non-state actors, particularly in relation to terrorist acts. In this regard, we reiterate our support for the full implementation of all relevant international instruments, starting from the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 1540, which we consider a crucial pillar of the global non-proliferation architecture.

Thank you, Mr Chair