



Permanent Mission of Italy
UN - Geneva

**Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention
Meeting of Experts**

Geneva, 29 July - 8 August 2019

MX 3 – Strengthening National Implementation

**Statement by Mr. Tancredi Francese,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Italy
to the Conference on Disarmament**

Agenda item 4

Measures related to Article IV of the Convention.

Madam Chair,

At the outset, let me congratulate you on your appointment, and assure you of my delegation's full support.

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.

Madam 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. 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.

At the policy level, the Italian National Committee for Biosafety, Biotechnology and Life Sciences (CNBBSV), established in 1992, supports the Government and the Prime Minister in the development of scientific guidelines and policies on the production of biologically active agents and public safety, as well as provides consultancy services and direct support in relation to national and EU law. More specifically, the Committee performs the following three functions: assessing the risks arising from the use of biological agents, identifying the risk factors and conditions for their classification; developing criteria for the definition of safety standards in relation to the applicative areas of biotechnology, biosafety and life sciences; contributing to drafting regulations transposing European directives that in any way implicate the involvement

of biotechnology, biosafety and life sciences. Through plenary meetings or ad hoc working groups, the Committee in the past years has tackled issues relating to genetic testing, gene therapy, tissue engineering, development of biotechnology, cloning, Italian and European legislation, clinical trials, GMOs, infrastructure, information, genetic testing, biobanks, and bionanotechnology.

Madam Chair,

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.

Madam 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. We share the view that such initiatives should not be seen as substitutes for legally-binding verification measures, but rather as tools to further build confidence and strengthen national implementation.

Finally, 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 and its follow-on resolutions, which we consider a crucial pillar of the global non-proliferation architecture.

Thank you, Madam Chair