



**Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)  
Eighth Review Conference  
Geneva, 7-25 November 2016**

**General Exchange of Views  
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Vinicio Mati,  
Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament**

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as President of the Eighth BTWC Review Conference. I would also like to thank you for the productive, inclusive, and transparent way you have led the preparation of our work and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

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

Mr President,

As recently noted by the UN Secretary-General, 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.

The following three weeks give us a valuable opportunity to do so. We should aim for a strong outcome that clearly outlines our goals for the next review cycle and identifies the most effective way to concretely strengthen implementation of the Convention.

Mr. President,

Universalization of the BTWC remains one of Italy's top priorities. The broader the membership of the Convention, the more effective its regime. Therefore, we urge, once again, the States that have not yet acceded to or ratified it to do so without delay.

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, such as voluntary peer reviews.

Italy also firmly supports strengthening implementation of articles VII and X of the Convention. National preparedness is essential in cases contemplated in art. VII, but so is international assistance. We believe it is important to identify concrete ways to strengthen each State Party's capability to respond rapidly and effectively to art. VII emergencies, including through the identification of a possible mechanism for the provision of assistance.

Italy is also actively engaged in international assistance and cooperation activities falling under art. X implementation. These include programmes on controlling infectious disease, ensuring emergency interventions and biomedical treatment. We remain convinced that effective international cooperation and assistance, relating to both art. VII and X, must rely on increased coordination with relevant international organizations, such as the WHO and the ICRC. The BTWC does not operate in a vacuum; its ties with the issue areas and regimes that are fundamental for its effectiveness must be maintained and strengthened.

Mr. President,

The BTWC operates in a highly dynamic scientific and technological context. In this fast-paced environment, it is essential to endow the Convention with the tools and procedures necessary to respond more rapidly to emerging needs and challenges.

In this view, Italy is keen on discussing ways to strengthen the intersessional work programme. We see merit in giving priority to more focused and in-depth discussions, and in favouring greater involvement of experts. We are also open to the possibility of conducting this work, or parts of it, in the format of Working Groups or Coordination mechanisms, similarly to other disarmament and arms control regimes. We also deem it useful to discuss ways to better outline the respective roles of the different components of the intersessional process, including the annual Meetings of Experts and Meetings of the States Parties.

An important element in the intersessional work programme will consist in the review of scientific and technological developments potentially relevant for the Convention. Several proposals were presented on how to make this process more effective and systematic, which provide a rich and productive basis for our discussions.

Before concluding, Mr. Chair, allow me to reiterate Italy's appreciation for the contribution of intergovernmental and civil society organizations to our work. NGOs, academic institutions, biological and health research centres as well as intergovernmental agencies and institutions are fundamental sources of knowledge and expertise, and critical partners in BTWC implementation at both national and global levels.

Thank you, Mr. President.