



Permanent Mission of Italy  
UN - Geneva

## **Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)**

### **Meeting of the States Parties**

*Geneva, 3 December 2019*

#### **General Debate**

#### **Statement by Amb. Gianfranco Incarnato Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament**

Mister President,

I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on your appointment. I am pleased to assure you of my Delegation's full support and cooperation.

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

Mister 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 183, and continue to call on States not yet party to the Convention to ratify or accede to it without delay.

The Convention operates in a highly dynamic environment, characterized by fast-paced scientific and technological developments. In such a context, it is essential to allow the BTWC 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 last 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 the BTWC 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 restate our availability to work with interested partners to be ready in case of pandemic emergencies. Furthermore, we believe it would be useful to further consider the South African proposal on elaborating guidelines for a State Party intending to submit a request for assistance under art. VII, as well as the French-Indian proposal to establish a database 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 objectives of the Convention. Their purpose is not to replace legally binding verification measures but to help demonstrating compliance with the Convention and to increase 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.

Mister President,

Italy sees value in the proposal introduced by Germany, together with the Netherlands and Sweden, about the possibility to reach common understanding on the purpose, scope, composition and working method of a Scientific and Technological Experts Advisory Forum (STEAF).

Such a body – together with the work of the Meetings of experts – would contribute to strengthen the Convention. It would equip it with a dedicated forum, able to draw in the knowledge of scientists and experts who are best placed to assess the potential for beneficial use as well as misuse of new technologies.

Finally, Mister 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 Convention 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 centers, which are fundamental sources of knowledge and expertise, and critical partners in BTWC implementation at both national and global levels.

Thank you, Mister President.