



Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)
Annual Meeting of States Parties
Geneva, 9 - 13 December 2013
General debate
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Vinicio Mati,
Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament

Madam President,

1. At the outset, let me congratulate you on your appointment as President of our Meeting and assure you the full support of the Italian delegation.
2. Italy fully subscribes to the declaration that the European Union will deliver under this agenda item.

Madam President,

3. Italy considers the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention a cornerstone in the effort to prevent biological agents or toxins from being developed, produced or otherwise acquired and used as weapons. In order to be even more effective, we consider the universalization of the Convention a top priority and we urge those remaining States which have not yet adhered to or ratified the Convention to do so without delay.

We will also continue to work towards the bans on biological and toxin weapons being declared universal binding rules of international law.

4. The potential risk related to biological agents and toxins constitutes a challenge to international peace and security and every possible effort should be exerted in order to strengthen the Convention's Article VII on responding to use or threats of use of biological or toxin weapons.

This goal is achievable only through full compliance with the Convention's provisions and their effective implementation at national level. The current inter-sessional process offers an opportunity to look for ways and means to enhance national implementation measures, including penal legislation, and control over pathogenic microorganisms and toxins .

In this context, confidence-building measures (CBMs) remain an essential instrument to promote the purpose of the BTWC and we esteem the results of the Meeting of Experts held last August to be positive and constructive in this respect. We are convinced that they allowed us to identify some key issues that will help to further advance our work . The CBM process has to be as effective as possible and the need for further changes should be analysed and decided upon at the 2016 Review Conference.

Moreover, we support further exploration or consideration of the idea of a peer review mechanism to promote exchange of best practice and build trust between States Parties.

Madam President,

5. Italy considers exchanges in biological sciences and technology, including equipment and material for peaceful purposes, a legitimate goal under the BTWC. However, there is the need to

ensure that, in accordance with Article III, only activities for peaceful purposes not prohibited by the Convention are undertaken. As a consequence, 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.

Madam President,

6. Special attention should be paid to scientific and technological developments in the field of biology. In this framework it is essential to build stronger and sustained links between the scientific and the diplomatic communities. The side events organized in connection with the formal meetings under this Convention can provide useful opportunities to this end. Furthermore, biochemistry constitutes a new frontline. We deem it of paramount importance that the CWC and BTWC communities work together more closely.

7. Finally, Madame Chair, Italy wishes to thank you for your "synthesis paper" on new ideas and issues discussed at the Meeting of Experts last August. It is a most useful compilation of the key points that emerged during the meeting. It will be of great help to focus our discussions during this week.

Thank you Madam President.