



**Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)  
Annual Meeting of States Parties  
Geneva, 1 - 5 December 2014  
General debate**

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

Mr. President,

1. I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating you on your Chairmanship of this important Meeting and assure you the full support of the Italian delegation.
2. Italy aligns itself to the declaration that the European Union will deliver under this agenda item.

Mr. President,

3. Italy would like to reiterate its strong support to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, which is a cornerstone of the international efforts to prevent biological agents or toxins from being developed, produced or otherwise acquired and used as weapons of mass destruction. We therefore consider that the universalization of the Convention is a top priority and we encourage those remaining States which have not yet adhered to or ratified it to do so without delay.

4. The potential use of biological agents and toxins as weapon constitutes a challenge to the international peace and security. For this reason, we believe that every possible effort should be exerted to ensure an effective response to this threat. Our common objective remains to strengthen the BTWC, and to improve the general engagement towards its implementation.

The Meeting of Experts in August has shown that there is room for exploring concrete avenues to strengthen the implementation, for example, of Article VII of the BTWC, on the assistance to States victims exposed to a danger as a result of a violation of the Convention.

The Meeting has also confirmed that any response to the use or threats of use of biological toxin weapons requires the effective implementation of the BTWC at the national level and full compliance to its provisions. In this context, Confidence-Building Measures remain an essential instrument to promote the purposes of the BTWC, as they help demonstrating compliance with the Convention, and renewed efforts are needed to increase the effectiveness of the CBMs process.

Moreover, we support further consideration of innovative approaches to enhance national implementation and build mutual trust among States Parties such as the voluntary exchange of information and best practices through, for instance, the proposed peer review mechanism.

5. Italy highly values international cooperation and coordination aimed at promoting biological and health capabilities for responding to disease outbreaks whether natural, accidental or of deliberate character. On this matter, we are of the view that the Ebola epidemic outbreak, in the response of which we are actively engaged, will provide us with useful lessons learned for making the BTWC more effective and operational.

6. Furthermore, we consider 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.

7. We believe that special attention should be paid to advances in bio-sciences, and we are therefore open to explore options to ensure an appropriate monitoring and assessment of scientific and technological developments that have an impact on the Convention. We are, in particular, in favour of stronger and sustained links between the scientific and the diplomatic communities, for example through side-events and thematic workshops.

In this regard, together with the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Institute (UNICRI), we have organized this Friday a side-event on international cooperation and coordination to mitigate CBRN risks. At the event, the opportunities arising from the EU Centres of Excellence Initiative will be illustrated by participating Italian Institutes and beneficiary countries.

Finally, Mr. President, 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 for our discussions this week.

Our main priority, at this stage, is to focus our attention on the preparatory process for the Eight Revision Conference in 2016.

In this prospect, the Intersessional Meetings have provided a valuable opportunity to put forward many new ideas and initiatives.

We believe that it is time to envisage a transparent, inclusive and participatory process aimed at consolidating common understandings on the proposals to strengthen the Convention that have emerged from the Intersessional Meetings. In this vein, we are supportive of the idea to establish a framework for consultations that will help us to have in-depth substantial discussions on the core items in agenda.

We are looking forward to this important Meeting of States parties with the hope that we can reach a common ground on a viable and constructive preparatory process, which would guide us towards a successful 2016 Revision Conference.

Thank you Mr. President.