



**Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)
Preparatory Committee of the Eighth Review Conference
Geneva, 26 – 27 April 2016**

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

Mr. President,

I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Chairman of the Eight Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention and to assure you of my delegation's support and full cooperation. Italy appreciates your efforts, transparency and cooperative approach in preparing for this important meeting. We look forward to working with you and your team in order to ensure a successful preparation of the Review Conference.

Italy aligns itself to the statement that the European Union will deliver later on.

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention remains a cornerstone of our efforts to preserve international peace and security and a fundamental instrument to contrast the threats posed by the use of biological agents and toxins as weapons of mass destruction. Italy believes that every possible effort should be made to strengthen this regime.

In this prospect, the universalization of the BTWC remains one of our key priorities, and we urge the States that have not yet acceded to or ratified it to do so without delay.

Confidence-Building Measures are another essential instrument to promote the purposes of the BTWC. They help demonstrating compliance with its commitments, and are key to increasing mutual trust and transparency. Italy, therefore, supports renewed efforts to increase the participation in the CBMs process and to strengthen it.

Also, Italy strongly supports the strengthening of implementation of art. VII and art. X of the Convention. In cases contemplated by art. VII, national preparedness is fundamental. International assistance provides an additional and often essential means to contrast such outbreaks. In this vein, we reiterate the need to increase the coordination and cooperation with relevant international organizations – such as the WHO and the ICRC. We look forward to defining a possible mechanism for the provision of assistance. Italy fully supports the commitments on international cooperation and assistance contained in art. X.

Mr President,

The upcoming Review Conference will be a key opportunity to take stock of the work we have conducted in the 2012-2015 intersessional cycle, and to build the bases of our collective engagement in the years to come. We should aim for a strong Review Conference outcome that will outline very clearly our goals for the next review cycle and identify the most effective way to concretely strengthen implementation of the Convention.

For this to happen, we need that all delegations fully commit to a productive and focused preparatory process, so that the Conference arrives at effective decisions. We fully subscribe to this commitment. In this regard, Italy is paying utmost attention to the various proposals that have been already submitted through working papers by State Parties. Also, we look forward to listening to the presentations of these and other proposals during this general exchange of views. We remain open to any initiative that will help us to advance implementation of the BTWC.

Before concluding, allow me to stress that Italy fully supports the participation of civil society in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure and the established practice. We highly value the contribution that NGOs and the academia can make to enrich our discussions. To this aim, we agree with your proposal to schedule an informal NGO session in August upon the completion of the exchange of views among States Parties.

Thank you, Mr. President.