



**Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)
Meeting of the States Parties
Geneva, 4-8 December 2017**

**General Debate
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 warmly congratulate you on your appointment and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation for a successful outcome of this Meeting of the States Parties.

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

Mr President,

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. The broader the membership of the Convention, the more effective its regime. Therefore, we welcome the recent accession by Samoa and continue to call on States not yet party to the Convention to ratify or accede to it without delay.

Mr. President,

In line with draft resolution L.49 adopted last October by the First Committee, Italy's primary goal for this meeting is to reach consensus on an intersessional process for the current review cycle of the BTWC. We believe that by adopting a flexible and constructive approach, and by focusing on issues of substance, we will be successful in this regard.

In our view, there are several areas on which the membership could agree to focus on with a view to achieving substantive progress. These areas include:

- Providing the BTCW with adequate tools to review systematically scientific and technological developments and their possible impacts on the Convention;

- Strengthening national implementation and preparedness as the essential basis to effectively prevent and, if needed, respond to, biological threats.
- Enhancing international cooperation and assistance both in relation to art. VII and to art. X;
- Promoting transparency and information exchange, including through greater participation in the CBM mechanism.

Many Working Papers, presented this year as well as in preparation for the 2016 Review Conference, offer significant input for in-depth and outcome-oriented discussions. I am referring in particular to the Working Paper jointly presented by the UK, US, and the Russian Federation. In my capacity as representative of the current Presidency of the Global Partnership against the spread of weapons and materials of mass destruction, I would like also to highlight the document presented by the Members of the initiative, focusing on strengthening the BTWC through a reinforced intersessional work programme.

Such a programme should be substantive and balanced, focusing on those questions which are important and potentially beneficial for the whole membership.

In addressing these and other issues relevant to the BTWC, it will be important to adopt a cooperative approach involving not only States, but also relevant international organizations, such as the WHO and the ICRC. The BTWC 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 centres, which are fundamental sources of knowledge and expertise, and critical partners in BTWC implementation at both national and global levels.

Mr. President,

Italy welcomes that an item on our agenda will be dedicated to financial issues. A meaningful intersessional programme as well as the continuation of the operations of the Implementation Support Unit rest on the timely and full payment of contributions.

Let me seize this opportunity to express our utmost appreciation for the work of the Unit, as well as our hope that it will be put in a position to continue its activities throughout the entire review cycle.

In conclusion, Mr President, I would like to re-emphasize the need to adopt a pragmatic approach able to set the basis for substantive work in the coming years, through an agreement on an ISP, in order to avoid any risk to weaken significantly the BTWC regime.

Italy is ready to give its constructive contribution to achieve this goal.

Thank you, Mr. President.