



Meeting of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)

22-25 November 2021

Agenda item 5 - General Debate, statement of Sri Lanka

Mr. Chairperson,

On behalf of the delegation of Sri Lanka, I would like to extend our congratulations to Ambassador Cleopa Mailu of the Republic of Kenya on his election as the Chair of the Meeting of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). Please be assured of our delegation's full co-operation and support in ensuring a successful conclusion to our deliberations. Sri Lanka also appreciates the Chairs of the Meetings of Experts and the staff of the Implementation Support Unit.

Sri Lanka aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

As we are all aware, the year 2021 presents unprecedented challenges for all of us as the world continues to fight against a deadly pandemic. We are also concerned about the rapidly deteriorating international arms control and security regime bringing in our vulnerabilities to heightened realities. It is in these worrying circumstances that we note the increasing relevance of the Biological Weapons Convention on its focus related to national preparedness and international cooperation

The BWC being the first multilateral disarmament treaty banning an entire category of weapons is the foundation of the international biological arms control regime. It is important that we carefully review the global impact of the pandemic to understand and better prepare ourselves for future challenges. Increased international cooperation is vital for combatting and management of global outbreak of diseases and the development of such comprehensive cooperation mechanisms should be urgently considered.

Sri Lanka shares the view of the Non-Aligned Movement that in order to strengthen the full implementation of the Convention, it is necessary to resume multilateral negotiations towards conclusion of a balanced and comprehensive legally binding Protocol dealing with all articles of the Convention including verification measures. Pending agreement of such instrument, Sri Lanka stands ready to support parallel interim measures to strengthen the implementation of the Convention.

Sri Lanka attaches great importance to Art. X of the Convention on international cooperation and assistance on exchanges in the biological sciences and technology. Some of the Additional understandings and agreements reached by States Parties at previous review conferences in this regard include the importance of continuous strengthening of existing international organizations and networks working on infectious diseases and full cooperation with the developing States Parties in the area of promotion and financing the establishment of vaccine production facilities. We call for further and full implementation of Art X and supports NAM's proposal on an Institutional Mechanism for International Cooperation and Compliance with Article X.

Given the outstanding scientific achievements and advances in science and technology and the rapid space in which they are being developed it is important that developing states are allowed to reap the benefits of peaceful uses of related sciences for the common benefit of the mankind.

Regular reviews of the new developments related to science and technology under Art XII in order to assess related threats and to respond accordingly to preserve the objectives of the Convention is equally important. However, any measures to address such risks should not be used to hamper legitimate peaceful uses under the Convention.

Sri Lanka recognizes the importance for State Parties to undertake concrete measures to strengthen national and international efforts to implement the Convention. At the national level Disaster Preparedness and Response Division of the Ministry of Health, the national focal point for implementation of the BWC, co-organized together with the ISU a two-day virtual introductory workshop on the BWC and its Confidence Building Measures in June 2021. More than 100 participants from almost 40 Sri Lankan government entities, benefitted from the workshop which was held as part of the National Preparedness Programme within the framework of EU Council Decision 2019/97 in support of the Biological Weapons Convention. The Disaster Preparedness and Response Division continues to conduct capacity development programmes in relation to preparedness and response to Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) emergencies for health and non-health sector stakeholders. CBRN readiness within the security Sector is also enhanced in order to respond better in case of accidental or intentional events. We look forward for further measures to promote capacity building in the fields such as disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis and containment, primarily through enhanced collaborative efforts.

In closing, Sri Lanka wishes to reiterate its commitment to the objectives of the BWC and to strengthen national capacities for effective implementation of the Convention. We remain committed to achieving a significant consensual outcome during the course of this meeting.