

Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)

Meeting of States Parties

Geneva, 1 – 5 December 2014

STATEMENT BY

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General debate

Mr President,

Please allow me first to say that it is good to see you back in the chair.

The way in which you presided over the expert meeting in August was highly professional and we continue to feel that we are in very capable hands. Let me therefore reassure you of the full support of this delegation.

Allow me also to use this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Daniel Feakes on his appointment as the new head of the ISU per 2015. We believe that his experience in the field of biological weapons can be considered a major gain for the BTWC and we are very much look forward working with him.

We also want to express our sincere thanks to Ms Gabriele Kraatz-Wadzack, who has done a great job in restoring and leading the ISU.

Mr President,

In addition to the statement by the European Union that will be delivered later, we would like to make the following remarks.

Only two years separate us from the next Review Conference. In order to be able to reach a positive and substantive outcome at the revcon, we believe it is necessary to start our preparations as soon as possible, thus allowing time for discussions with all stakeholders on the best way forward. We feel that our current schedule of just two meetings per year is not enough to reach common understanding among all States Parties.

To help setting up such a preparatory process, together with Germany we are planning to submit a Working Paper titled 'Towards the 2016 BTWC Review Conference: Proposals for strengthening the implementation of the BTWC.

The aim of this paper is twofold:

Firstly, to promote the idea for setting up informal open ended meetings with all interested States Parties in order to better prepare for the 2016 revcon. These meetings should in our view be inclusive, cross-regional, open-ended and avoid a predetermined outcome. The overall objective should be fairly broad, allowing for an open-minded debate amongst States Parties.

Secondly, to put forward some suggestions of topics that may be discussed during those meetings, such as how to build confidence? How to make the database of offer and requests of assistance under article X more effective? How to improve national implementation? The list we propose is not meant to be exhaustive and other topics may be discussed.

We would like to use this opportunity to invite all States Parties to sponsor this paper as we are aiming for a broad support. Both the German and my own delegations can provide you with copies of the working paper.

Mr President,

The Netherlands attaches great importance to the full implementation of all commitments of States Parties to the BTWC.

We believe a broader debate on compliance issues is necessary in order to strengthen compliance with the Convention. To facilitate and stimulate such a dialogue the Netherlands financed several meetings on this matter.

In follow-up to the French Peer Review, the Netherlands together with Belgium and Luxembourg will conduct a Benelux Peer Review exercise. By conducting this exercise we aim to improve the national implementation of the Convention while also contributing to build confidence between States Parties. Transparency is key as are sharing best practices on international cooperation.

CBM's represent a unique instrument to help increase mutual trust, generate transparency and help demonstrate compliance. It is for this reason we have decided to include the CBM's in our peer Review exercise. They will form the basis of our national implementation evaluation.

We will elaborate more on the modalities and objectives of the Benelux Peer Review Exercise during the Side-event on the Peer-Review mechanism organized by France, that will take place this Thursday the 4th of December from 13.00-15.00 in Room XXV. You are all invited to attend this side-event.

Mr President,

The review process of our biosecurity regime is still going on. In the following days we will provide some insight in the pioneering developments of the Netherlands Biosecurity Office in increasing biosecurity awareness amongst biosecurity professionals and scientists. We will do this through a separate statement.

Thank you.