



Key EU messages

Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)

Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness (MX4)

Geneva, 6-7 September 2021

Madam Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, I wish to thank you for your efforts and leadership in organising this Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness and to assure you of the EU and its Member States' full support and active participation in the forthcoming deliberations.

I would like to take this opportunity to share some examples of the EU's recent efforts regarding Assistance, Response and Preparedness, including the EU's response to the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Madam Chair,

Strengthening international preparedness for and response to current and future pandemics remains a top priority for the EU. From the very onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the EU has led efforts to promote a multilateral response to the pandemic and better prepare for future health emergencies. In this light, the European Union and its Member States spearheaded a resolution at the World Health Assembly aimed at strengthening WHO preparedness for and response to health emergencies.

The EU also cooperates with the WHO in the context of the Global Health Security Agenda that involves 70 countries as well as other international and non-government organizations and private sector companies. Overall the EU's global response to the Covid-19 pandemic amounts to more

* The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

than 40 billion Euros from ‘Team Europe’, a joint action involving the EU, its Member States, and European financial institutions. These funds are helping partner countries:

- to address the health emergency;
- to strengthen their health systems;
- to put in place water and sanitation measures and
- to mitigate the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic.

The ‘Team Europe’ response includes almost 2.8 billion EUR pledged to the COVAX scheme to provide vaccines to all corners of the world regardless of the countries’ wealth.

Madam Chair,

We welcome proposals aimed at assistance, response, and preparedness, including operationalization of Article VII.

In this vein, we particularly support the proposal by France and India to establish a database for assistance in the framework of Article VII and we appreciate their efforts earlier this year to further develop this initiative through a series of three Webinars.

Furthermore, we continue supporting the proposal by South Africa on guidelines to States Parties for seeking assistance under Article VII.

We have also rendered our support to the proposal by the UK on an international coordinating body (BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/WP.6), which follows on from the joint working paper by the Russian Federation and the UK submitted at the 2018 MSP (BWC/MSP/2018/WP.6).

We encourage all States Parties to study these proposals in a constructive spirit with a view to allowing their endorsement by consensus ahead of the Ninth Review Conference.

One of the EU’s projects entitled ‘Preparedness of State Parties to prevent and respond to attacks involving biological agents’ under the EU Council Decision 2019/97 of 21 January 2019 reinforces the BTWC with the funds of 3 million EUR over three years in support of Article VII of the Convention. In cooperation with experts from EU Member States and relevant international organisations the project offers training courses, table-top exercises, and national or sub-regional workshops with a view to increasing national and regional resilience against the misuse of biological agents and the States’ capacity to prevent and respond to such attacks.

Despite the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic has severely impacted in person gatherings, the ISU nevertheless managed to launch in 2020 and 2021 the EU funded national preparedness programmes for Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Botswana.

Furthermore, the EU provides over 7 million EUR in support of efforts by a number of States Parties to improve their national preparedness in biosafety and biosecurity in the context of the UNSC Resolution 1540. This support is provided through the following Council Decisions:

- Decision in support of the implementation of UNSCR 1540, under which the UNODA organised National roundtables for Mongolia in May and for Botswana in August this year;
- Decision in support of the strengthening of biosafety and biosecurity in Ukraine;
- Decision in support of the strengthening of biosafety and biosecurity in the Latin American countries Argentina, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

Since 2010, the EU has sought to mitigate chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) risks in third countries through the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence Initiative. It represents the EU's largest civilian external security programme. The programme has allowed for the setting up of eight regional secretariats with the involvement of 62 countries.

It is the EU's belief that national capabilities should be developed in a coordinated manner to counter biological threats regardless of their nature. CBRN national and regional action plans respond to such threats. This kind of consolidated plans will enable capacity building projects to be tailored according to a country's needs and also to facilitate donor coordination.

Let me here draw attention to the fourth biosafety and biosecurity project that was highlighted in my intervention under MX1 LabPlus Africa, a new COVID-19 project launched at the end of 2020 with a large geographical area coverage: Senegal, West and East Africa. With the EU support of 10 million EUR, the project will allow the strengthening of diagnostics and health services as well as capacity building in Surveillance and Epidemics Preparedness, Intelligence, Response and Control and develop multidisciplinary curricula including in Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) technologies.

Thank you, Madam Chair