

**Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Li Song
at the General Debate of the 2020 Meeting of States Parties
of the Biological Weapons Convention**

(Geneva, 22 November 2021)

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to congratulate you on behalf of the Chinese delegation on your assumption of the Chairmanship of the Meeting of States Parties of the BWC. China would like to pledge its full support to you.

At present, the world is still in the throes of the Covid-19 pandemic. The fluctuation in infection figures and the frequent mutation of the virus are a timely reminder of the transboundary nature of biosecurity, the interlinkage of human destiny and the need for international solidarity. This unprecedented pandemic is both a public health emergency and a major test of the global biosecurity governance and its international cooperation mechanisms. A strengthened BWC which can play a better role in the new era to remove the threat of biological weapons and promote the peaceful use will be of great significance to advancing universal security and common development in line with the overall interests of the international community.

During the First Committee of the 76th Session of the General Assembly, the Foreign Ministers of China and Russian Federation issued a Joint Statement on Strengthening the BWC, outlining their positions on enhancing the mechanisms of the Convention and working to seek substantive progress at the forthcoming Review Conference. This has given an adequate expression to the strong determination and sense of responsibility of China and Russia towards safeguarding global biosecurity and upholding multilateralism.

Mr. Chairman,

China attaches great importance to biosecurity. President Xi Jinping has emphasized on many occasions that biosecurity is a global issue and needs to be tackled through international cooperation. China has always fully and faithfully fulfilled all the obligations under the BWC. Since 1989, we have submitted every year full declarations on Confidence-Building Measures. On 15th of April this year, the Biosecurity Law of the People's Republic of China entered into force. It has clearly stipulated that China will fulfil obligations of international treaties to which it is a party and specifically prohibits the development, production or acquisition by other means, stockpile, possession and use of biological weapons. This law will further enhance China's commitment to the Convention.

At the same time, the Biosecurity Law upholds the concept of a Holistic Approach to National Security, deals with development and security comprehensively, and covers the main aspects of biosecurity. Apart from the prevention of the threat from bioterrorism and biological weapons, it also covers areas such as the prevention and control of major outbreaks of new and sudden infectious diseases and diseases of animals and plants, the research and application of biotechnology, laboratory safety, safety control of human hereditary resources and bio-resources, the prevention of invasion of exogenous species and the protection of biodiversity and also contains

clear provisions on national governance system for biosafety, the legal responsibilities and other fields. The National People's Congress has formulated clear requirements for the dissemination and implementation of the Biosecurity Law, and relevant governmental bodies have established coordinating mechanisms for national biosafety to ensure its comprehensive and effective implementation, and to comprehensively coordinate important items and work on national biosecurity. China is willing to work with all interested parties to further strengthen cooperation in legislation and policy formulation, risk assessment, emergency response, capacity building and other areas for biosecurity, learn from each other's useful experience, and continuously improve the level of biosecurity.

In the face of unprecedented pandemic, China has made consistent efforts together with the international community, has comprehensively promoted international cooperation against the pandemic and has launched the largest global humanitarian emergency action since the founding of the PRC. After the outbreak of the pandemic, China was the first to share the whole genome sequencing information for SARS-CoV-2, has regularly reported information on the pandemic to the WHO and relevant countries, received on many occasions international expert groups from the WHO for study and research on the prevention and control of the pandemic and origin tracing for the virus, making our contributions to the global prevention and control of the pandemic. China is committed to bridging the vaccine gap. Already in the early stage of the pandemic, President Xi Jinping pointed out that Covid-19 vaccines should be a global common good. China has declared that next year it will endeavor to provide 2 billion doses of vaccine abroad. So far it has provided over 1.7 billion doses, including free donations to over 110 countries. At the recently concluded summit meeting of the G20, President Xi Jinping further proposed the global vaccine cooperation initiative. China has committed to the provision of 3 billion USD in the

coming years to support the efforts of developing countries to combat the pandemic and to resume economic and social development.

Mr. Chairman,

The 9th Review Conference next year will be an important opportunity to comprehensively enhance the BWC and improve the global bio-security governance. China wishes to put forward following propositions:

First, it is necessary to send out a strong political message. True multilateralism should be practiced in addressing in a comprehensive manner the fundamental goal of universal security and common development. While fully recognizing the core role played by the Convention in eliminating threats posed by biological weapons and in promoting peaceful use of biology, it is important to formulate practical measures to comprehensively enhance the Convention mechanisms with a view to promoting effective and verifiable compliance and making biological S&T bring benefits to the entire humanity. States parties might wish to consider, as an outcome of the Review Conference, a joint political declaration affirming the consensus on and political commitment to the Convention in terms of its status and role and its future course of development.

Second, efforts should be focused on the effectiveness of the Convention. A verification mechanism offers the most effective guarantee for compliance and mutual confidence. During the series of Meeting of Experts held in the current review cycle, most of the States Parties made a strong appeal for the re-launch of negotiations of a verification protocol. The 9th Review Conference should adopt a decision on the issue and set up ad hoc mechanisms such as an open-ended working group. Once again, we urge the country concerned to make a political decision not to be the one and only country standing in the way of the re-launch of the negotiation. States Parties may conduct further technical discussions on the basis of the draft text

of 2001 on which a consensus was almost reached then. The aim is to analyze the impact of S&T development on verification process and identify as much as possible the priorities and orientation for future negotiations.

Intermediary measures can be taken to enhance the Convention mechanisms, pending conclusion of the verification protocol. For instance, contents of confidence building measure (CBM) reports can be further universalized and the reporting form refined to include such elements as overseas military biological activities and vaccine production facilities so as to increase the integrity and transparency of the reporting. China welcomes such activities as voluntary compliance peer review conducted among some States Parties and hopes that these activities will contribute to a final agreement on the verification protocol.

Third, we should vigorously strengthen international cooperation and assistance. In the context of the pandemic, it is vital to safeguard the right to peaceful use and promote international cooperation. At previous Meetings of Experts, some countries noted that access to anti-epidemic materials, drugs, vaccine research and development technologies was repeatedly blocked, which greatly affected the response to the pandemic and harmed the economic and social development and people's life and health. Others pointed out that some States Parties ignored the provisions of the Convention and implemented discriminatory policies and unilateral sanctions, which seriously hindered peaceful uses and international cooperation. China fully supports the position of non-aligned countries in this respect. We call on the Review Conference to focus on the implementation of Article X and take tangible measures to address the concerns of developing countries.

China actively promoted the adoption by the First Committee of the 76th UNGA a resolution entitled "Promoting International Cooperation on Peaceful Uses in the Context of International Security", aiming at starting the discussion process in the

framework of the UN, balancing non-proliferation and peaceful use, and ensuring the peaceful use and universal sharing of technologies and resources in related fields including biology. This facilitates the overall consideration of peaceful uses in various fields, as well as discussions in the framework of the BWC. We hope that all parties will actively support and participate in the follow-up process of the UNGA.

Fourth, we should promote the healthy development of biotechnology. Advocating responsible bioresearch and formulating necessary voluntary codes of conduct will help to fully release the biotech dividend, while avoiding misuse and abuse and preventing security risks. At previous Meetings of Experts, the Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Scientists received wide support, which China appreciates. Recently, the partners of "Tianjin Process" continued to promote Tianjin Guidelines around the world and made new progress. We hope more States Parties can co-sponsor the Working Paper submitted by China, Pakistan and co-sponsored by Brazil, to jointly promote the adoption of the Tianjin Guidelines at the Review Conference, and mandate the follow-up inter-session process to discuss the promotion of the Tianjin Guidelines.

Meanwhile, we support establishing a S&T review body of the Convention. We look forward to further discussions on the format, mandate, agenda items and budget of the relevant body in order to forge a consensus and facilitate a decision at the Review Conference. As a principle, no matter what scheme is finally adopted, it should cover as much as possible the main aspects of biotechnology, ensure the geographical balance and the full participation of developing countries, and adhere to the working principle of consensus.

Fifth, we should strengthen a global biosecurity mechanism. We are open to increasing the human, financial and other resources of the ISU. At the same time, it is necessary to take an integrated approach to the relationship between the

Convention and other international organizations and mechanisms, improve the coordination and synergy of their functions and resources while respecting their respective mandates, including establishing and improving a monitoring and early warning system and a joint response mechanism for biological risks and a resource reserve and allocation system. China supports the initiative of President Tokayev of Kazakhstan to establish an International Agency for Biological Safety. We look forward to constructive discussions with all parties on this issue.

Mr. Chairman,

The bio-military activities carried out by the United States both in and outside its territory has caused serious compliance concerns. The United States is a depository state of the BWC, and it should play a leading role in implementing the Convention and strengthening the mechanism of the Convention. However, with the largest number of bio-military activities in the world, the serious lack of transparency in its bio-military activities at home and abroad poses a grave threat to the security of relevant states and regions. In addition, the US has been single-handedly blocking the negotiation for verification protocol for 20 years. We call on the US to act responsibly, give a full clarification and accept verification of its bio-military activities at home and abroad, and refrain from being a stumbling block on the negotiation of a verification protocol.

Mr. Chairman,

China looks forward to joining other States parties in the efforts to firmly uphold and strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention and facilitate substantive results at next year's Review Conference.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.