Mister President,

I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on your appointment. I am pleased to assure you of my Delegation’s full support and cooperation.

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

Mister President,

Italy believes that the international community needs to invest more resources in the international architecture dealing with biological weapons. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how important is for us to work together to improve global biosecurity and biosafety. The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention is of the utmost importance 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. We wish to thank both the current and the previous Presidencies, together with the ISU, for their efforts in this direction and we call on States not yet party to the Convention to ratify or accede to it without delay.

The Convention operates in a highly dynamic environment, characterized by fast-paced scientific and technological developments. In such a context, it is essential to allow the BTWC to respond more rapidly to emerging needs and challenges. With this aim, a strong intersessional work programme is fundamental.

We appreciate the substantive work and discussions carried out by the Meetings of Experts, which usefully allowed for technical input by relevant international, regional and non-governmental organizations. Italy commends the respective Chairs for the suggestions they have formulated in order to achieve common understanding and for identifying possible outcomes that can constitute a basis for the upcoming Review Conference.
In this vein, we encourage you, Mister President, to submit an up-dated version of the Aide-Memoire introduced by the French Presidency at the MSP in 2019, in order to include all proposals considered during the current review cycle. We hope that substantive elements of such proposals, especially those that enjoy wide support by the States Parties, could already be considered as part of the Report of this Meeting.

Italy believes that more efforts could be invested in strengthening implementation of the BTWC provisions relating to national preparedness and response, international cooperation and assistance in relation to art. VII and to art. X, and transparency.

In particular, we deem especially important to identify and agree on possible mechanisms for providing assistance to States Parties confronted with art. VII emergencies, strengthening their capability to respond rapidly and effectively. We also look with interest at the possible establishment of a systematic and structured science and technology review process in the framework of the Convention, to monitor relevant developments and assess their potential implications. Furthermore, we welcome the development on voluntary and inclusive Codes of Conduct for Scientists, to prevent misuse of bioscience research without hindering beneficial outcomes.

At the same time, Confidence-Building Measures are essential to promote the objectives of the Convention and we welcome the high number of submissions reached in 2020 and in 2021. We are also open to discussing other potential means to foster transparency and facilitate the exchange of best practices. The purpose of these initiatives is not to replace legally binding verification measures but to help demonstrating compliance with the Convention and to increase mutual trust.

Finally, Mister President,

Italy remains convinced that, to address the issues relevant for the BTWC, it is important to adopt a cooperative approach involving not only States, but also relevant international organizations, such as the WHO and the ICRC. The Convention 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 centers, which are fundamental sources of knowledge and expertise, and critical partners in BTWC implementation at both national and global levels.

Thank you, Mister President.