THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

2020 MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

GENEVA, NOVEMBER 2021

GENERAL STATEMENT

Thank you Mr. President.

To begin with, the delegation of the Republic of Serbia would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the function of President of the 2020 Meeting of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), and to commend the wise and shrewd guidance of the proceedings, particularly the way in which you have facilitated and advanced states parties’ discussion on the way forward in these troubling times, thus enabling a continuity of work, despite the lack of formal meetings. In this regard, I would like to assure you of Serbia’s steadfast support and cooperation.

Honorable delegates,

The Republic of Serbia reaffirms its commitment to the Biological Weapons Convention and attaches high priority to its full-fledged implementation. This instrument represents a safeguard so that these dreadful weapons would never be used. The ongoing pandemic serves as a stern reminder of the horrors that might occur if biological weapons were to be deployed. This being said, it is clear that the Convention’s framework has been, for some time now, in desperate need of strengthening and upgrading. Against this backdrop, we are hopeful that consensus on key topics pertaining to the institutional strengthening of the Convention and other relevant substantial issues will continue to emerge. We would like to particularly draw the attention to the Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Scientists, which is already now ripe for approval by States Parties. We eagerly look forward to the Ninth Review Conference with a staunch belief that decisions on this, and many more items, will be put forward and consensually adopted.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honor to inform you that the Republic of Serbia has taken a range of institutional, legislative, and administrative measures aimed at enabling a wholesome implementation of the Convention at the national level. We would like to highlight that the Law on the Prohibition of the Production, Development and Stockpiling of Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction came into force in November 2011, while the Bylaw on the Ratification of the BWC was adopted as early as 1974. In addition, over the course of the last few years, a number of supplementary legislative acts were promulgated, among which are the
2018 Law on Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Situation Management; the 2019 Amended Law on Transport of Dangerous Goods, which regulates the conditions for conduct of internal and external transport of such goods by road, water, and railway; the 2013 Law on Export and Import of Dual-Use Products, and so forth. Furthermore, the National Strategy 2021-2025 on Preventing the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction was adopted in July of this year, with the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 still being in force. Likewise, a National CBRN Team composed of experts from different ministries is fully operational.

We would also like to inform honorable delegates that Serbia's participation within the EU Project P88 has commenced, with the aim of capacity building in the countries of South-East Europe, conducted within the UN-EU initiative to form a CBRN Center of Excellence. The first meeting in the framework of this Project was held on 21 October at the Military-Medical Academy of Serbia. Additionally, the Republic of Serbia is adamant to continue strengthening its work in the forthcoming period on awareness raising concerning the importance of bio-security and bio-safety in laboratories that deal with infectious agents.

Distinguished colleagues,

The universalization of the Convention should remain a top priority. It is regrettable that no new accession has occurred since the last Meeting of States Parties. However, we took note of positive news from some states not parties on the steps taken toward joining the Convention. We praise the activities taken by the some Member States, UNODA, the ISU, and the EU in this regard. We are also cognizant of the hard work done by the ISU in the previous period on administering the Convention. We notably refer to the migration of data to the Convention’s new website, where the electronic CBM database, and the database on Article 10, are also situated. The configuration of the eCBM has already born fruit, as this year a record number of States Parties has submitted annual reports. In this regard, we would like to take this opportunity to remind the participants that the Republic of Serbia submits its CBM reports on a regular and uninterrupted basis.

The Republic of Serbia also notes with satisfaction of the ameliorating financial situation achieving due to the package of decisions adopted at the Meeting of States Parties in 2018. Nevertheless, it remains vital to continue monitoring the situation and the implementation of these decisions, in order to keep the Convention in a financially sound position.

Mr. President,

In closing, we would like to underscore that an inflection point is before us. The good news is that through dialogue, openness, trust, and flexibility success is inevitable. The goals are not that far away. Members can count on this delegation’s full support.

Thank you for your attention.