Statement by the State of Palestine in 2020 BWC Meeting of States Parties

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The State of Palestine aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Republic of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. At the outset, please allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the chair of this Meeting of States Parties, and to assure you of my delegation’s full support.

Mr Chair,

In the past few years, the State of Palestine has acceded to several disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and conventions, given its firm belief in the importance of international cooperation and multilateralism in countering the humanitarian consequences of weapons, avoiding the existential threats posed by weapons of mass destruction, and promoting peace and sustainable development.

Mr Chair,

The State of Palestine has begun national implementation of the BWC after the designation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates as a national contact point and after the designation of several ministerial and agency contact points in the areas of health, agriculture, industry, academic research, security, customs, and data gathering.

Our interest in the BWC has been widely commended, and we are grateful to the European Union for its support to us through the BWC Extended Assistance Program following European Union Council Decision 2019/97, in line with its consistent support aimed at propelling our State-consolidation efforts.

The State of Palestine is eager to seize this opportunity to cooperate with the EU, United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and other States Parties to improve its national implementation capacity in the areas of inter-ministerial coordination, legislation and criminalization, law enforcement, biosafety and biosecurity, and the drafting of Confidence Building Measures reports.

We will continue improving our national implementation through multilateral and bilateral technical cooperation and assistance under Article X of the Convention.

Mr Chair,

Israel, the occupying power, is not party to the Biological Weapons Convention. As it continues to illegally occupy both the territory and the border entries to the State of Palestine, this poses a major challenge to implementation of BWC provisions: indeed, we cannot guarantee whether there are any biological weapons, agents or facilities situated or produced in the occupied territory particularly in illegal Israeli settlements and colonies or held by terrorist settlers, nor can we guarantee effective customs control over such agents.

Biological Weapons are a category of Weapons of Mass Destruction that are easy to develop, but near impossible to contain once used. The diseases they spread can cross borders, cause serious destruction to human and zoological life, and major disruption of economies and public spheres, as we have witnessed in recent years. We recall the importance of the implementation of the BWC in the Middle East region as a part of efforts towards the establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Finally, the State of Palestine recognizes the important and challenging task ahead of us as an international community to enhance implementation of the Convention in the upcoming BWC Ninth Review Conference. We support all initiatives aimed at promoting accountability and verification of the convention, especially
in these challenging times, when more than ever, international institutions and multilateralism must be supported and reinforced.

I thank you.