Mr. Vice-Chair,
I 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, as well as Ukraine, and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

Article VII of the Convention requires States Parties to provide or support assistance to another Party that has been exposed to danger in case of violation of the Convention.

The implementation of this Article is widely recognised as a key obligation under the Convention and has primarily a humanitarian objective. Current circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as past experiences show that international assistance should be considered in case of a biological outbreak, though this assistance would not necessarily need to be channelled through the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), as an outbreak might not be due to a biological weapon. This confirms that appropriate tools and procedures should be established in the framework of the Convention in order to provide assistance in the best and most effective way in the case of an outbreak due to a biological weapon.

In this regard, the EU welcomes proposals aimed at assistance, response, and preparedness, including operationalisation of Article VII. Building on an agreement reached at the Eighth Review Conference, which supported “the establishment of a database open to all States Parties

---

*The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
to facilitate assistance under the framework of Article VII”, we particularly support the proposal by France and India to establish such a database. Implementing Article VII of the Convention, the database would allow the matching of specific offers with requests for assistance. It would also add to developing effective measures and coordination with relevant international organisations to respond to a biological or toxin weapon.

Furthermore, we continue supporting the proposal by South Africa on guidelines to States Parties for seeking assistance under Article VII. While it is accepted that an investigation of alleged use should follow the provision of assistance, that should not hamper the humanitarian objective of this Article. Developing clear procedures would help the UN Security Council, if requested for assistance, to make a prompt decision. The quicker the decision is made, the faster the provision of assistance. It would ensure timely operationalisation of their assistance obligation pursuant to Article VII. At the same time, information accompanying the request for assistance would be useful to States Parties in preparation to provide assistance.

In addition, 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 working paper submitted at the 2018 MSP (BWC/MSP/2018/WP.6).

In conclusion, let me here draw attention that 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 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.

I thank you, Mr. Vice-Chair.