Mr. Chair, Distinguished Representatives, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

The Council on Strategic Risks appreciates this opportunity to address the 2022 Preparatory Committee to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC).

Today, work to advance the goals of the BWC may be more important than ever. However, progress may also be more fragile and elusive than ever in the treaty's history.

We continue to see disturbing trends that are weakening international cooperative systems regarding nonproliferation, arms control, and disarmament. Norms against the possession and use of weapons of mass destruction appear to be weakening.

Biological threats from all sources appear to be rising. The world continues to grapple with a devastating pandemic. The threat of states possessing and possibly using biological weapons is increasingly a part of advanced disinformation and misinformation campaigns, thereby complicating conflict dynamics as well as the ability of public health laboratories to carry on their important work.

These and other factors make strengthening the BWC critically important. Understanding just how complex the current geopolitical situation is, we and other nongovernmental organizations aim to expand our work toward advancing that cause, alongside the United Nations and States Parties who share the same goal.

We wish to particularly express appreciation and gratitude to all the officials and diplomats tirelessly engaged in the critical conversations and relationship-building required to continue making the BWC a tool for effective governance and cooperation for addressing biological weapons risks.

We welcome and strongly endorse bold new initiatives that the BWC community has undertaken to not only address pressing present issues, but to ensure that future generations and new disciplines interacting in the life sciences are ready, willing, and able to respond to the biological weapons risks of the future.

As an independent organization, the Council on Strategic Risks also aims to develop and advance initiatives that could help strengthen the BWC and facilitate cooperation toward its goals. Such ideas include a potential future rapid response force for emerging biological events, and potential mechanisms for better addressing the potential risks posed by the rapid global expansion of high-containment biological laboratories.

In closing, thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to share these perspectives and insights with you and the community this forum has convened. We wish you a very productive meeting and, again, wish to reaffirm our commitment to the BWC and its mission.

Very Respectfully,

Christine Parthemore

Christine Parthemore
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