

**The Remarks by H.E. LI Song at the Meeting
of the Preparatory Committee for the Ninth Review Conference
of the Biological Weapons Convention**

Mr. Vice Chairpersons,

At the outset, please allow me, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, to congratulate both of you for jointly assuming the role of Chairpersons. China appreciates your efforts to overcome the difficulties caused by the pandemic and actively coordinate and push forward the preparatory process for the Review Conference. China will spare no efforts in its cooperation with you, so as to jointly advance this meeting smoothly and well prepare for the Review Conference.

The BWC is the cornerstone of the global biosecurity governance. This coming Sunday, April 10th, marks the 50th anniversary of its opening for signature. Standing at a new starting point, we should not only fully affirm the important role of the Convention in preventing biosecurity threat and promoting peaceful use of biotechnology, but also directly confront the threats and challenges, and strengthen the Convention mechanism through the Review Conference so as to better serve universal security and common development. In order for the Review Conference to achieve substantive outcome, China would like to share the following thoughts:

First, we should send a clear and powerful political signal. No matter how the international security situation changes, the political commitments of the 183 States Parties to the Convention should be unwavering. China suggests the States Parties to issue a joint political declaration at the Review Conference, which fully affirms the status and role of the Convention, and demonstrates the political commitments to strictly implement their obligations under the Convention, comprehensively strengthen the Convention mechanism and promote the universality of the Convention. We hope the two Vice Chairpersons could consult States Parties in this regard.

Second, we should negotiate and establish a verification mechanism at an early date. To ensure compliance through verification is the internationally agreed principle. The experiences in past decades have fully proved that the establishment of a verification mechanism is the best approach to ensure the authoritativeness and effectiveness of treaties in the field of arms control and disarmament. Biosecurity should not be an exception, much less to be blocked by a certain country. China once again calls upon the Review Conference to make a decision on setting up an ad-hoc group to restart negotiations on a legally-binding Verification Protocol, on the basis of the nearly agreed upon draft in 2001.

Third, we should strengthen the mechanism for Confidence Building Measures (CBM). Before the establishment of the verification mechanism, voluntary transparency bears great value to promote strategic mutual trust and address the concerns regarding non-compliance. Certain

country, led by its defense department, is conducting so-called cooperative projects in biosecurity activities around the world, the quantity and scale of which far exceed all other countries. These projects should be open and transparent to the international community and to the host countries. Doing so could also help promote mutual trust and international exchanges, so as to reduce the biosecurity threats and improve public health readiness. We call for adding an item on States Parties' bio-military activities conducted in other countries to the CBM Forms.

Fourth, we should strengthen international cooperation and assistance. Against the background of the pandemic, it is more relevant than ever to promote peaceful use and strengthen international cooperation, which concerns the vital interests of all States Parties. China calls upon the Review Conference to put weight on the implementation of Article X of the Convention, take concrete measures to safeguard the legitimate rights of developing countries, with the aim to fully realize the purpose and objectives of the Convention. We must ensure that all countries have unimpeded and non-discriminatory access to materials, medicines, vaccines and R&D technologies related to fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic. In the long term, it is necessary to continuously promote the peaceful use of biotechnology to bring benefits for all. Last year, the 76th UN General Assembly adopted the resolution "Promoting International Cooperation on Peaceful Uses in the Context of International Security". It is our hope that all parties will actively support

and participate in the follow-up process of the UNGA, and jointly promote the peaceful use and international cooperation in various fields including biological field.

Fifth, we should advocate responsible biological scientific research. China highly appreciates the wide supports received by “The Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Scientists” (the Tianjin Guidelines). It is our hope that the Tianjin Guidelines can provide reference for all stakeholders, to better prevent the misuse and abuse of biotechnology, and promote the healthy development of biotechnology. We will submit a working paper to this meeting to introduce the latest progress in promoting the Tianjin Guidelines. A virtual side event under the theme of “Biosecurity for All: The Role of Scientists” co-hosted by China and the Inter-Academy Partnership (IAP) Secretariat, will be held at noon on April 6th. All parties are welcome to join us. We once again encourage States Parties to co-sponsor and support the Tianjin Guidelines, and to jointly push for its endorsement at the Review Conference. At the same time, China supports the establishment of a science and technology review body under the Convention and will continue to participate in relevant discussions.

Sixth, we should coordinate and strengthen the biosecurity mechanism. China is open to strengthening the manpower, financial and other aspects of the ISU. We support the strengthening of collaboration between the Convention and other relevant international organizations and mechanisms, in accordance with their respective mandates, to

strengthen coordination and integration in terms of expertise, functions and resources, in order to improve global biosecurity governance. We also support the initiative put forward by Kazakhstan's President, H.E. Mr. Tokayev to establish an International Agency for Biological Safety, and are ready to have constructive discussions with all parties in this regard.

Mr. Vice Chairpersons,

Recently, Russian Federation published relevant documents of the US bio-military activities in Ukraine, and raised serious concerns about the US compliance with the BWC, which has caused widespread concerns of the international community and heightened the importance and urgency of clarifying the concerns about the implementation of the BWC through consultations and cooperation among States Parties within the framework of the BWC. It is the obligation of all States Parties to comply with the Convention. Since the US is the country conducting the most bio-military activities in the world and the only country opposing the establishment of a verification mechanism, the concerns of the international community are reasonable and rational. I would like to emphasize that this is neither about US biolaboratories in Ukraine alone, nor a new problem arising from the current situation.

China was once a victim of the biological weapons. China always stands for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of all weapons of mass destruction including biological weapons and resolutely

opposes the development, possession or use of biological weapons by any country under any circumstance. We welcome the international community's assessment of the documents revealed by Russia under the framework of the BWC and the UN. At the same time, the US clarifications could also be heard in a fair and impartial manner. Through these assessments and clarifications, the international community will draw a fair conclusion on whether these documents are false information or not. This is in fully compliance with the Article V and VI of the BWC. We look forward to constructive response from the US, which will help restore the international community's confidence in its compliance with the BWC. Meanwhile, the US also needs to clarify its bio-military activities in the rest of the world to make an unequivocal and credible explanation to the international community. As one of the depository countries, the US should set an example rather than an exception in the field of strict implementation of all the obligations under the BWC.

Mr. Vice Chairpersons,

China attaches great importance to biosecurity. President Xi Jinping has emphasized on many occasions that biosecurity is a global issue and increasingly grave threats to biosecurity need to be tackled through international cooperation. China has always fully and faithfully fulfilled all its obligations under the BWC. Since 1989, we have submitted every year full declarations on Confidence-Building Measures. The Biosecurity Law of the People's Republic of China, which entered into force in April

2021, has clearly stipulated that China fulfills obligations of international treaties to which it is a party. Those include prohibiting the development, production or by other means acquisition, stockpile, possession and use of biological weapons, as well as joining and strengthening the international cooperation in biosecurity field. This Law fully reflects the political commitment of China to the BWC.

China is continuously improving the relevant regulations and working mechanism to ensure the comprehensive and effective implementation of this Law. China is willing to work with all interested countries to further strengthen exchanges and cooperation in legislation and policy formulation, risk assessment, emergency response, capacity building and other areas for biosecurity, learn from each other's useful experiences, and continuously improve the level of biosecurity.

After the outbreak of the pandemic, China has made consistent efforts together with the international community, has comprehensively promoted international cooperation on fighting against the pandemic and has launched the largest global humanitarian emergency action since the founding of the PRC. China was the first to share the whole genome sequencing information for SARS-CoV-2, has regularly shared information on the pandemic with the WHO and relevant countries, received on many occasions international expert groups from the WHO for study and research on the prevention and control of the pandemic and origin tracing for the virus, and has been making our contributions to the global prevention and control of the pandemic.

China is committed to bridging the immunization gap. At early stage of the pandemic, President Xi Jinping proposed that the COVID-19 vaccine should be a global public good. As of the beginning of March this year, China has provided more than 2.1 billion doses of vaccines to more than 120 countries and international organizations, accounting for one-third of the total global vaccine usage outside China, which makes China the country that provides most vaccines abroad. China will continue to take developing countries as the main partners of vaccine cooperation, and help developing countries build immune defence and restore normal social life as soon as possible.

Biosecurity has no borders, and the destinies of all mankind are closely linked. The international community is in need of solidarity and cooperation. China looks forward to working together with other States Parties to firmly uphold and strengthen the BWC and push for substantive results at the upcoming 9th Review Conference.

Thank you, Mr. Vice Chairpersons.