



EU Statement

Item 5

**First Preparatory Committee
Ninth Review Conference
of
the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention
Geneva, 4 April 2022**

Mr. Vice-Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

We resume this meeting of the Preparatory Committee as Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine rages on. We condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's armed aggression, which grossly violates international law and the UN Charter, and undermines international peace and security. The EU resolutely supports Ukraine's right to self-defence and the Ukrainian armed forces' efforts to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity and population in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter. The EU demands that Russia immediately cease its military actions, withdraw all its troops from

* The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognised borders.

At the same time, let me reiterate that the EU condemns in the strongest possible terms the involvement of Belarus in the ongoing aggression against Ukraine.

The UN General Assembly, in its resolutions of 2 March and 24 March 2022, has deplored in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine in violation of Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter. These resolutions sent a powerful message to Russia and Belarus that they are isolated in their actions.

The EU calls on Russia and Belarus to abide by these resolutions. The EU remains strongly committed to the fight against impunity for atrocities.

Moreover, we are outraged that the threat of use of weapons of mass destruction has been evoked in the course of this conflict and that military action is creating serious CBRN risks for the population and the environment, with the potential for catastrophic results.

It is alarming that, as part of its aggression against Ukraine, Russia has been engaged in a campaign of disinformation in spreading unsubstantiated and unfounded claims against Ukraine regarding the alleged development and possible use of biological weapons.

These false claims are part of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and undermine the international rules-based order.

At the UN Security Council meetings on 11 March and 18 March, convened by Russia to discuss these Russian allegations, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, was very clear on the Russian allegations, stating that the "United Nations is not aware of any biological weapons programmes in Ukraine".

Moreover, the international research institutes whose documents are referred to, and who have been engaged in collaboration with Ukrainian laboratories, have made it clear that their civilian cooperation as well as the civilian research carried out in the Ukrainian laboratories has been completely legitimate and in line with the BTWC.

Such Russian allegations have been refuted multiple times by independent media, international experts and fact-checkers.

Ukraine is a responsible member of the Biological Weapons Convention (BTWC) in full compliance with the Convention. It submits regularly its Confidence Building Reports in line with the obligations under the BTWC. Such reports provide detailed accounts of the work carried out in the laboratories on the territory of the submitting country.

The EU has supported Ukraine in its efforts to strengthen Biosafety and Biosecurity in line with Ukraine's obligations under the BTWC. This support has notably been channelled through Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/1296 that provides for €1.9 million notably in support of improving Ukraine's relevant legislative and regulatory framework. The Decision is implemented by the OSCE. Ukraine is furthermore a partner of the EU CBRN Centres of Excellency Initiative.

Mr. Vice-Chair,

The EU is firmly committed to a multilateral and treaty-based approach that maintains and reinforces international peace and security. The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) is one of the major pillars of the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. It embodies the important and legally-binding norm that the development, production, stockpiling and usage of biological agents and toxins as weapons is unacceptable.

The EU recognises that biological agents and toxins are widely used for peaceful purposes in line with the BTWC provisions. At the same time, the risk of natural or accidental spread of dangerous pathogens exists.

As a long-term supporter of the BTWC, the EU is firmly committed to contributing to the success of the Ninth Review Conference of the BTWC. Our primary aim is to adopt forward-looking decisions and recommendations, which will provide a clear roadmap for the next review cycle, including a robust intersessional programme.

The EU regards verification as a central element of a complete and effective disarmament and non-proliferation regime, including within the BTWC. We encourage the Review Conference to continue to explore the issue of verification in greater depth, taking into account the developments in science and technology relevant to the Convention as well as the evolution of the threat, and we stand ourselves ready to do so.

We will elaborate on more detailed position of the EU in the course of the week.

The EU continues to provide substantial support to the Convention, including significant financial contributions. The current Council Decision includes support also for the preparations of the Ninth Review Conference.

Mr. Vice-Chair,

The early election of a President-designate of the BTWC Review Conference is crucial for preparations for such an important event. The President-designate in place is vital for a successful and substantive outcome of the Review Conference.

In the current circumstances, the EU is willing to explore all avenues for a successful Ninth Review Conference, including its postponement if a President-designate and the States Parties would benefit from such a decision.

I thank you Mr. Vice-Chair.