IRELAND

Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention
Preparatory Committee for the Ninth BWC Review Conference

4 April 2022

Statement of Ireland
Thank you Vice-Chair,

First, I would like to begin by wishing you every success and to thank you and the ISU for the work you have undertaken in preparation for this meeting in extremely challenging circumstances. I assure you of Ireland’s full cooperation and support.

Ireland aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the European Union and would like to add the following remarks in a national capacity.

Vice-Chair,

As we prepare for the Ninth Review Conference, it is timely to reiterate that Ireland regards the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) as a critical instrument in the global community’s efforts to achieve a world free from all weapons of mass destruction.

The Review Conference provides us with an opportunity to reaffirm and strengthen our commitment to the BWC and its full implementation. Our efforts at this PrepCom must be substantive and productive in order to prepare the ground for a successful outcome at the Review Conference.

Vice-Chair,

We cannot go further without condemning Russia’s unsubstantiated claims against Ukraine, at the UN Security Council and through communications to States Parties of the BWC, regarding the alleged development and possible use of biological weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. This cynical
disinformation campaign is part of Russia’s attempts to excuse its unjustifiable and unlawful aggression against Ukraine.

The unfounded allegations are a misuse of the convention for political purposes and lack any credibility. Ireland considers it intolerable to levy such baseless accusations against Ukraine, a State Party in good standing to the treaty. Such actions undermine attempts to strengthen the Convention and complicate our work at this PrepCom.

Vice-Chair,

There can be no doubt of the urgency of our work. Developments since the last Review Conference, in particular the COVID-19 crisis, have clearly shown that biological threats will not discriminate amongst victims in our increasingly interconnected world. Our efforts must be truly global and cooperative so as to ensure effective disease monitoring, detection, control and prevention.

As the Ninth Review Conference approaches, we must recognise the necessity to translate proposals and working papers tabled during the intersessional period into action. This is essential in order to ensure that the Convention remains responsive and relevant moving forward. Indeed, the COVID 19 pandemic and the global shutdown demonstrated how quickly biosecurity and biosafety issues impact and disrupt society. The pandemic is not over. Its effects continue to illustrate the gaps and weaknesses in bio-safety preparedness which persist at local, regional, and international levels. It is important that the Review Conference makes substantive progress across the many challenges and proposals we face as part of the operation of this Convention.
Vice-Chair,

The setting of concrete objectives and agreeing on resourcing are key steps. For my delegation, agreement on a Science and Technology review mechanism is a top priority and is urgently required. Advances in biological sciences and biotechnology today are occurring at an accelerated and unprecedented pace. Many of these scientific advances bring added benefits to society and assist us in our achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. We need look no further than the development of Covid-19 vaccines, achieved in record time, in order to realise the speed of advancement.

We must also, however, remain vigilant of the potential risks that co-exist alongside peaceful benefits. The same speed of advancement could jeopardise effective regulation and policy oversight. This underscores the necessity of establishing a science and technology review mechanism. It’s clear that such a mechanism enjoys broad support and we should now set our minds to examine how to agree on the specific characteristics of such a mechanism. In addition, this meeting should also examine in detail how we can advance other issues including biosafety and security, a verification mechanism, and the strengthening of CBMs.

Vice-Chair,

In addition to substantive matters this PrepCom should also turn its attention to a number of institutional and organisational matters. We welcome your intention to convene informal consultations on the nomination of a President for the Review Conference and hope that the clash of dates for the meeting with the NPT Review Conference can be resolved. It is essential that the incoming President is given adequate time in order to prepare the meeting properly and conduct the necessary preparatory work.
We note once again that payment by States Parties of their annual assessed contributions, in full and on time, is the only guarantee of the sustainability of the BWC process. In particular, the role of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) is critical in providing support to States Parties. Ireland continues to support the strengthening of the ISU’s role and the inclusion of further activities in its mandate, such as a standing science and technology advisory and liaison function. The ISU must be adequately supported.

Vice-Chair,

Ireland is committed to working to ensure equitable gender representation in meetings of the BWC. As co-chair of the International Gender Champions’ Disarmament Impact Group, Ireland was pleased to co-host a First Committee side event highlighting the importance of women in international security. The data show that the BWC is still far from reaching equality in terms of participation. The evidence is clear that diverse participation and the full, meaningful, and equal participation of women and men in our meetings would benefit the Convention. Much work is still required in this area and we welcome Panama’s concrete contribution in this regard.

Vice-Chair,

To conclude, we look forward to working together with States Parties, International Organisations, academics and Civil Society, to ensure that the outcome of our work at the preparatory committee, and at the Review Conference will be a truly universal, strengthened and more effective Convention.

Thank you.