Chairperson,

Sweden is fully aligned with the statement of the European Union. I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity. Sweden condemns in the strongest terms Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Russia bears sole responsibility for this flagrant violation of international law.

Sweden demands that Russia immediately cease its military aggression, withdraw its troops from Ukraine and respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. We demand respect for international law, including international humanitarian law.

Russian accusations against Ukraine having a US-funded biological weapons program are unfounded and part of Russia's disinformation efforts. Ukraine is a state in full compliance with its international disarmament and non-proliferation obligations. Sweden reiterates that it is the responsibility of all states, including the Russian Federation to ensure that the global ban on biological weapons is respected.

Chairperson,

Current events have highlighted the importance of defending and strengthening the global norm against biological weapons, of which the BTWC constitutes a central part. The Ninth Review Conference provides States Parties with a vital opportunity to reaffirm and strengthen our commitment to the Convention.

The Preparatory Committee has both crucial procedural matters to agree upon and substantive issues to take forward in order to lay the foundation for a successful Review Conference.
There seems to be broad agreement on the need for a mechanism for regular science and technology review. It is also high time, in order to keep the BTWC at pace with the rapid advancement in life sciences and biotechnology. Sweden hopes this meeting will pave the way for agreement at the upcoming Review Conference on the establishment of such a mechanism, even though more discussion may be needed to settle the details.

We should also continue to explore means of strengthening national implementation. This includes efforts to heighten awareness in industry and academia. Subscribing to codes of conduct is one measure to mitigate the risk of non-state actors accessing materials, equipment and knowledge for offensive purposes.

Chairperson,

Synergies between the BTWC and other relevant instruments and mechanisms can further reinforce the global norm against the use of biological weapons. The Secretary General’s Mechanism is indispensable for the international community’s ability to deal with allegations of use of biological and chemical weapons. Sweden continues its engagement to contribute to the operational readiness of the mechanism through the Swedish Defence Research Agency, and the exercises they coordinate together with partners.

Chairperson,

It is Sweden’s firm conviction that a gender equality perspective on all aspects of our collective work will strengthen international peace and security.

We support and promote the equal participation of women and men in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, and would take this opportunity to encourage States Parties to promote women’s participation and strive towards gender-balanced delegations in future meetings, including at the upcoming BTWC Review Conference.

With these words I conclude and wish us all a productive meeting.

Thank you, Chairperson