

**Formal Consultative Meeting of the States Parties
to the Convention on the Prohibition of the
Development, Production and Stockpiling
of Bacteriological (Biological) and
Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction**

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Item 6 of the agenda

**Respective outstanding questions by the Russian Federation
to the United States and to Ukraine concerning the fulfilment
of their respective obligations under the Convention in the context
of the operation of biological laboratories in Ukraine**

**Statement by Germany to the Formal Consultative
Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the
Prohibition of the Development, Production and
Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin
Weapons and on Their Destruction**

Submitted by Germany

Mr Chairperson,

1. I have asked for the floor for three reasons.
2. First, Germany is chairing the G7-led Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction this year. For twenty years the Global Partnership has worked towards reducing the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including biological weapons, and of related materials, equipment or technology. Its 31 members are engaged in threat reduction activities around the globe. Ukraine and the US are member countries. Several Global Partnership members, including the US and my own country, have been conducting activities to promote biosafety and biosecurity in Ukraine and have become objects of disinformation and propaganda from the Russian Federation.
3. On 29 March the German Chair issued a statement on behalf of the Global Partnership in which we condemned Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine as a serious breach of international law and of the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. In that statement we made several comments that are relevant for the matter we are discussing here, and for that reason I want to recall them.
4. In the statement we pointed out that Ukraine is a long-standing, constructive and committed member of the Global Partnership with an exemplary non-proliferation record, as demonstrated by its renouncing of nuclear weapons inherited from the former Soviet Union in 1994. For more than two decades, Global Partnership members have worked together with Ukraine to increase the safety and security of facilities dealing with sensitive nuclear, biological or chemical materials for exclusively peaceful purposes and to support and enhance protective capabilities against the abuse of such materials.
5. On behalf of the Global Partnership we expressed our dismay that the threat reduction activities carried out by members of the Global Partnership in and with Ukraine, which have been undertaken in full transparency and openness, have become the object of fabricated claims and false allegations made by the Russian Federation. We categorically denounced



this malicious and completely unfounded disinformation campaign. We made it clear that we consider it unacceptable to levy such false accusations against Ukraine, a state in full compliance with its international non-proliferation obligations. We expressed our deep concern that these accusations may prepare the use of biological or chemical weapons by those who levy them. Finally, we reaffirmed the full support of the members of the Global Partnership to their fellow member Ukraine.

6. These key points of the statement, unfortunately, have lost nothing of their relevance. In view of the close cooperation with Russia in the initial phase of the Global Partnership, when GP members devoted billions of dollars to secure or destroy Weapons of Mass Destruction and related materials of the former Soviet Union to prevent them from falling into the hands of terrorists or proliferators, the ongoing Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the false allegations levied against GP projects conducted in and with Ukraine are even more regrettable and utterly unacceptable.

7. There is a second reason why I asked for the floor. Biological threat reduction activities conducted by Germany under the umbrella of the Global Partnership in and with Ukraine have become the object of false allegations and disinformation from Russia, too. Although Germany has not received a complaint under Article V, we have been targeted by the Russian Federation in a range of official statements and media declarations. We believe that these accusations are part of a wider propaganda campaign conducted against countries that stand up against Russia's war of aggression, and therefore relevant for the matter discussed here.

8. The projects that were mentioned by Russia are part of the German Biosecurity Programme, funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. The programme started in 2013 and has since supported 25 countries in minimising biological risks. The programme is part of the German contribution to the goals of the G7 Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. It contributes to strengthening international cooperation for peaceful purposes based on Article X of the BWC. The programme has also supported partner countries' responses to the threats caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

9. Activities of German-Ukrainian cooperation projects within the framework of the German Biosecurity Programme have started in 2016. They include:

- training measures in order to improve diagnostic capabilities of the Ukrainian partner laboratories;
- trainings on biosafety and biosecurity in order to make the laboratories and the work done there more secure in accordance with international standards;
- biosurveillance studies on endemic pathogens with the goal to recognise and prepare for potential outbreaks;
- the promotion of young scientists;
- raising awareness for biological risks as well as biological disarmament and non-proliferation principles, practices and instruments;
- building German-Ukrainian scientific networks.

10. German-Ukrainian cooperation projects work to minimise the risks associated with pathogens, not to create new ones.

11. In repeated statements, including at UN Security Council meetings and through presentations sent to BWC States parties, Russia has claimed that Germany's activities in Ukraine are in breach of the BWC. Similar claims have been made about other partners' programmes, such as those of the United States. Those claims have been accompanied by a rather haphazard and arbitrary collection of documents, consisting of about a dozen intercepted or hacked e-mails and project documents. Those documents were drafted by different authors over a period of several years, and include a memorandum of understanding, an import permit and a project presentation. None of them are classified. Some of them are publically accessible, the rest consists of project-related communication which is part of any

bilateral co-operation project. The only data that should have remained protected and which has been exposed by Russia is personal data of participating scientists.

12. Contrary to the wild claims made by the Russian Federation, all of the documents presented by Russia are fully consistent with the peaceful nature of those projects aimed at improving biosecurity and public health preparedness. None of those documents can in any way be held as proof of the assertions made by Russia. The way Russia presents these completely innocuous documents and constructs its allegations is a showcase of pure disinformation. Many of the arguments brought forward are outright absurd and can easily be debunked even by non-experts. To give an example, the mere fact that the Bundeswehr Institute of Microbiology is one of several institutions participating in Germany's biosecurity programme is by itself and without any further evidence taken as proof of the alleged military character of the programme. The German Biosecurity Programme, let me make this very clear, does not have a military purpose. The participating institutions have been selected because of their specific expertise in biosafety and biosecurity.

13. Russia further has been claiming that as part of one project by the Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine (BNITM), blood serum samples were taken from disease-infected individuals belonging exclusively to the Slavic ethnic group. This way, Russia was insinuating that the programme is collecting pathogens which could be used as a biological weapon against Slavic people. Fact is that in the relevant project pathogens have never been gathered or stored, neither from Slavic people nor from any other. The serological samples used in the project came from anonymized blood donations and did not contain any infectious pathogens. They were merely tested for antibodies to determine prevalence of and human exposure to zoonotic viruses in order to enhance health emergency preparedness. Russia is trying to create some kind of "Nazi scientist scare" which simply does not live up to any scientific scrutiny. And, as far as I know, Ukrainians are Slavic people, too. This is just part of the overall Russian propaganda of allegedly having to fight re-emerged Nazis in Ukraine and the West. It is a cheap and despicable lie.

14. The most preposterous case was the inclusion of a public information leaflet of the German Biosecurity Programme in a presentation made to the UN Security Council on 13 May. To portray a leaflet made to inform the public, the very proof that the programme is fully transparent, as proof of a covert bioweapons programme is more than grotesque. But Russian propagandists seem to believe that by piling up all sorts of claims and assertions something will stick in peoples' minds.

15. At the same time, Russia is evading all opportunities for real exchange. For example, Russia chose not to attend the side-event co-organised by Germany during the BWC PrepCom meeting in April in Geneva where we explained the objectives and instruments of our biosecurity programme.

16. Those 13 countries in Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia with whom we currently conduct biological threat reduction projects know of course that these activities are of an exclusively peaceful nature and fully in line with the objectives of international cooperation under Article X of the BWC. They appreciate these activities for boosting their biosecurity preparedness and assisting their public health systems. The nature of the projects in Ukraine is not by any means different from what we are doing in those other countries.

17. Finally, Mr Chairperson, there is a third reason for asking for the floor. That reason is that Germany is and always has been a committed State party to the BWC. We consider the BWC to be a cornerstone of the global disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control architecture. It was the first international convention that banned an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. We are concerned about the risk of a possible re-emergence of biological weapons, emanating not only from non-state actors, but possibly from state actors in spite of their obligations under the BWC. We see the enormous developments in life sciences which potentially may be abused for military purposes. We have seen with the COVID-19 pandemic how devastating the appearance of a new pathogen can be, and regard this as a wake-up call to re-examine our safeguards against the possible use of pathogens as a weapon. We believe the norm established by the BWC in 1972 must be protected, and the BWC must be strengthened to live up to the requirements of the 21st century. That should be our main concern in the run-up to this year's BWC Review Conference.

18. What we see in this Article V process here is not aimed at strengthening the norm. To the contrary. We see the allegations made by the Russian Federation as an easy-to-see-through attempt to justify its illegal and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. Russia is resorting to almost any means in its desperate attempts to defend what cannot be justified or excused: a blatant violation of the UN charter and its commitment to save future generations from the scourge of war.

19. What Russia is doing here is not a legitimate use of the provisions of the BWC. It is an abuse of the Convention. Such action is unacceptable. Russia damages the very norm it has pledged to uphold as a depositary state. Such abusive action is an attack on all other States parties in full compliance with their obligations and in good faith. This is a serious matter of concern for all BWC States parties, because it diminishes the security of all of us. We must not remain on the sidelines, but draw our conclusions and engage in order to uphold the authority of the Convention.

Thank you Mr Chair.
