

**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**

**National statement by Australia – BWC Article V
Consultative Meeting**

Submitted by Australia

Thank you Chair,

1. On behalf of the Australian delegation, I would like to begin by thanking you for presiding over this meeting and assure you of the full support of my delegation for your work.

Chair,

2. The BWC has established a strong norm against biological weapons, and with almost universal membership, is a pillar of the multilateral disarmament regime. Upholding this norm is critical to international peace and security, and all States Parties have a role to play in that. The fact that we are all here this week is testament to the importance of the Article V mechanism within the BWC framework. Maintaining the integrity of this mechanism is paramount.

3. Australia is therefore gravely concerned about the Russian Federation's motivations for invoking the mechanism. We have heard and seen the allegations put forward by the Russian Federation and we do not find them even remotely credible. Quite simply, the Russian Federation have not provided any evidence of BWC non-compliance whatsoever. Rather, what we have seen and heard from them is a series of wild assertions and insinuations with no factual basis.

4. To mention just a few examples, we have seen how Russia has selectively used and omitted language from formal and publicly available documents, and in other cases, blatantly mischaracterised them. Russia's arguments about pathogen strain collections not 'agreeing' with public health concerns in Ukraine have been convincingly refuted by US and Ukrainian presentations this week. Russia's suggestion that the US and Ukraine are seeking to 'weaponize' migratory birds and bats are not only absurd but a threat to valuable international research.

5. In response to these assertions, we have heard the facts – the facts about US cooperation and assistance to Ukraine under the Biological Threat Reduction Program. Based on these facts, it is clear that the cooperation and assistance provided by the United States to Ukraine has been for legitimate peaceful and prophylactic purposes. Indeed, these are precisely the types of international cooperation activities envisaged under Article X of the BWC.



Chair,

6. Russia's allegations are not just false, they are dangerous. Russia's blatant disinformation is designed to malign legitimate international biosecurity assistance and distract from Russia's own illegal, immoral aggression against the people of Ukraine.

7. Cooperation and assistance activities under Article X are a critical element of the BWC framework and of international biosecurity cooperation more broadly. In making its spurious allegations, Russia risks undermining the legitimate efforts by all States Parties to engage in such activities. At a time when we need to intensify cooperation on public health to end the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthen our preparedness for future pandemics, it is quite frankly disgraceful that Russia has chosen to use the BWC as a platform for promulgating its propaganda. As both a BWC depositary state and permanent member of the UN Security Council, we call on the Russian Federation to end its blatant politicisation of the BWC and cease its disinformation.

8. We trust that at the conclusion of the consultative meeting this week, we can draw a line under these spurious allegations and get on with the critical and urgent work of strengthening the BWC. For our part, Australia stands ready to work constructively with all States Parties to take meaningful and inclusive steps to do just that at the BWC Review Conference later this year.

Thank you Chair.
