

**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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**2022 Meeting**

Geneva, 26 August and 5-9 September 2022

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 of the Georgian delegation at the Formal Consultative Meeting pursuant to Article V of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)**

**Submitted by Georgia**

Mr. Chair

1. As a responsible member of the international community, Georgia fully adheres to the noble goal aimed at strengthening the global security architecture and I would like to underline that Georgia considers BTWC as a key disarmament regime, which contributes to our collective security.
2. As we speak, Russia's military aggression against Ukraine is still ongoing. This action violates the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, and is in breach with Russia's obligations under the international law. Georgia reiterates its unwavering support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, including Crimea and Donbas.
3. Today's meeting is held in a rather unusual situation, when one member state, namely Russia by invoking Article V of the Convention accuses US and Ukraine of neglecting the requirements of the Convention. These attempt of Russia to justify its unlawful aggression are futile as the rest of its disinformation campaign.
4. We commend United States and Ukraine for very precise and timely yesterday's response. It demonstrated an excellent example of cooperation among States Parties under the Article X.
5. U.S. cooperation with Ukraine, Georgia and other countries today is fully consistent with the BWC. This kind of International cooperation contributes to strengthen ability to detect, diagnose, and report infectious disease outbreaks caused by human and animal pathogens and to improve overall biosafety and biosecurity environment in the partner countries.
6. Russia's current allegations have focused on functioning of bio laboratories in Ukraine, but they have also made insinuations about other countries. Russia on several occasions has spread disinformation regarding the functioning of the Richard Lugar Center aiming at diminishing the role of successful institution contributing to the security of Georgia and throughout the entire region.



7. Georgia's relevant agencies have repeatedly commented on the details of the status and functioning of the Richard Lugar Public Health Research Center, however Russia's constant provocations have forced us to address the issue again since we see the urgent need to attract attention of the international community to the Russia's fabrications and rude attempts to diminish the role of successful institution contributing to the security of Georgia and throughout the entire region.

8. The U.S. Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (DoD CTR) began its biological threat reduction activity with Georgia to reduce the risk posed by the former Soviet Union's illegal biological weapons, which left Georgia with unsecured biological materials after the fall of the USSR.

9. The facility was launched in 2013 and represents the highest-level institution of the Laboratory Network of Disease Epidemiological Surveillance. The Lugar Center, along with its equipment were fully transmitted to the ownership of the Government of Georgia and since 2018, the Lugar Center along with the laboratory network have been fully financed by the Government of Georgia.

10. At this juncture, let me recall that in order to ensure the transparency of the Richard Lugar Centre, Georgia hosted an international peer review exercise at the facilities of the Centre on November 14-15, 2018. The above-mentioned event was organized jointly by the Georgian and German sides and Security and Bio experts from up to 20 countries were able to participate in this exercise. It is worth to mention that the invitation to participate has also been extended to the Russian experts; however, a strict refusal of their participation has been received. This very fact clearly demonstrates that Russia's allegations are of political nature and are groundless.

11. On December 4-7 of the same year, at the meeting of the member states of the Convention, the conclusion of the international experts on the Lugar Center enjoyed a full support. The report states that the institution is in full compliance with the relevant standards.

12. We believe that international cooperation and assistance are essential to support States Parties in their capacity building efforts, particularly in the domains of biosecurity and biosafety.

Dear Colleagues,

13. We hope that relevant steps will be taken in order to ensure successful Review Conference at the end of this year and let me reiterate that Georgia is fully committed to its international obligations under the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological Weapons.

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