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**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**

Distr.: General  
9 September 2022

Original: English  
English and French only

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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**

**Speech by the Swiss delegation to the Formal Consultative Meeting under Article V of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Final Declarations of the Second and Third Review Conferences. Speech by H.E. Mr. Felix Baumann**

**Submitted by Switzerland**

Thank you Mr. Chair,

1. Taking the floor for the first time, let me join previous speakers in thanking you for your readiness to chair this meeting. You can count on the full support and cooperation of the Swiss delegation in the fulfilment of your duties.
2. Consultations pursuant to Article V of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in accordance with the decisions taken at the 2nd and 3rd Review Conference are a crucial means to solve any problems which may arise in relation to the objective of, or in the application of the provisions of, the Convention. The mechanism has to be used with all the necessary care in order to uphold its integrity. An invocation of this Article should be based on a credible and responsible use of data and information.
3. Public Health and Health Security are two interlinked fields that overlap significantly, especially in the area of infectious diseases. One central pillar of an efficient and informed public health response to infectious disease outbreaks is knowledge about pathogens, diseases and vectors as well as their distribution and spread. These factors can be assessed by basic research and disease surveillance, respectively.
4. In July 2022, States Parties received two aide-memoires accompanied by a number of supporting documents from the Russian Federation raising claims and allegations against Ukraine and the United States and their compliance with the provisions of the BWC. Switzerland carefully assessed these documents as well as the presentations that Russia made earlier this week in the context of its invocation of Article V. We also evaluated and closely listened to the written and oral responses thereto provided by Ukraine and the United States.
5. Based on our assessment, we conclude that, for the most part, the documents submitted by Russia contain information concerning legitimate public health and animal health surveillance data. We furthermore came across documents pertaining to the international transfer of biological material. We cannot but conclude that these documents, rather than proving nefarious intent or purposes, indicate that due diligence and legal aspects



were considered in the referenced projects, many of them in support of Article X of the Convention.

6. We would like to specifically underline that high-containment laboratories are built to contain highly contagious pathogens and allow for their safe handling. It is therefore neither surprising nor worrisome that the pathogens listed in the documents submitted by Russia can be found in high-containment laboratories in Ukraine and all over the world. Many countries separate their research and public health activities, and their laboratories specialise on a given set of pathogens - so that, commonly, many laboratories analyse pathogens causing more widespread diseases, and only a few laboratories analyse and characterise highly pathogenic organisms, since the latter are usually less widespread. Such pathogens are kept safe in high-containment laboratories, particularly for assay development and reference purposes.

7. Based on these factors, Switzerland considers the projects on which the Russian Federation bases its allegations as being fully in line with International Cooperation and Assistance according to Article X of the BWC and as important activities to further national public health capabilities. On an international level, projects like these aid in understanding infectious disease epidemiology and increase our common knowledge on vectors and the respective diseases they carry.

8. After a careful consideration of the information submitted by the Russian Federation and the explanations provided by Ukraine and the US, Switzerland is of the firm view that the allegations made have not been substantiated; that the conclusions drawn are neither convincing nor credible; and allow in no way to draw the conclusion that the obligations of the United States and Ukraine under the BWC have been violated.

9. In view of the above, we believe that we should close these consultations under BWC Article 5 as swiftly and efficiently as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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