

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

13 December 2023

English only

2023 Meeting
Geneva, 11–13 December 2023

Norway National Statement

Submitted by Norway

Mr. Chair,

Allow me to congratulate you, Ambassador Canizares, on your assumption as chair of this Meeting of States Parties (MSP). My delegation is looking forward to your steady guidance and we stand ready to support your efforts in achieving a successful outcome this week.

Since the entry into force of the BTWC we have seen scientific breakthroughs in the biological domain that have greatly improved public health. History has shown that innovation in biotechnology has the potential to reshape societies. However, with new technology comes new risks. As the UN Secretary General pointed out last year: the threat of bioweapons is clear and present.

Efforts to ensure universal adherence and full implementation of the Convention by all States Parties are key tasks. It is therefore very timely that the 9th Review Conference agreed on an intersessional program with a strong mandate. The discussions of the Working Group to Strengthen the Convention has clearly demonstrated that there already are measures ready to be implemented.

As we move forward, Norway remains committed to actively engage in the discussions on compliance and verification. We will advocate for concrete measures that strengthen the Convention while ensuring its adaptability to contemporary challenges in biological security. The aim is not only to bolster global resilience against biological threats, but also reaffirm our collective commitment to a safer and more secure world for all.

Domestic capabilities and *national* implementation measures will always be at the front line of our efforts to manage biorisks; ensure biosafety and -security; enforce nonproliferation; and combat diseases. The evolving landscape of biological sciences underscores the necessity for international cooperation and assistance. We need strong partnerships, not only between states, but also with civil society, the private sector, academia and other stakeholders.

We are therefore working closely with ISU on a project aimed at strengthening the implementation of Article X, through building human capacities through South-South cooperation, enhancing biological safety and security, and contributing to the peaceful use of beneficial technologies in low-income countries. A detailed outline of the project and some key takeaways can be found in Working Paper number 5 submitted to this meeting.

Cooperation and assistance in the realm of biology and life sciences often happens outside of the BWC. International agencies, like WHO, the World Organisation for Animal Health, and FAO, do indeed have the primary role in providing assistance to states parties within their mandates and fields of competence. It is key that we avoid duplication and rather work to ensure complementarity and coordination with relevant agencies.



Given the indispensable role of international cooperation and assistance, I would like to reiterate that Norway condemns Russia's continued disinformation campaigns in the biosecurity realm. Unfounded accusations targeted at the US and Ukraine damage trust and hampers international cooperation. We also regret recent efforts to prevent observer organisations from delivering statements in BWC plenary meetings, thus undermining the principles of inclusivity and transparency.

Mr Chair,

Norway would like to highlight the benefits of reinforcing the convention's implementing capacity and to ensure its sustainability. Even a modest increase in institutional investment will bear fruit as we move forward in our work to strengthen the convention.

Finally, Mr. Chair, let me emphasise the importance of ensuring gender equality in our work. We also encourage diversity of participation in disarmament, as we believe this increases representativity, makes us more effective and will lead to better outcomes.

Thank you.
