

**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

**Statement of the Delegation of Ukraine at the Meeting of
State Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (11-13
December 2023, Geneva)**

Submitted by Ukraine

Mr. Chair,

At the outset, let me extend our sincere congratulations on the assumption of your duties. We express our confidence in your leadership and affirm our dedication to working collaboratively under your guidance to achieve the goals set forth by the Convention.

We welcome South Sudan as a new full-fledge party, a development that underscores the Convention's progress toward universality, and encourage the remaining twelve States to embrace the Convention without hesitation, reinforcing the global consensus against the development and use of biological weapons.

Mr. Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ukraine, as a co-author of the BTWC, approaches this meeting with a deep sense of responsibility and a commitment to the principles enshrined in the Convention. At the same time, our nation, unfortunately, bears witness to the impact of external armed aggression on biosecurity, underscoring the urgency of our collective efforts in ensuring the effective implementation of the BTWC.

Let's make the most of this chance. Let us seize this moment, not merely as custodians of Convention but as architects of change, ensuring its resonance in the 21st century.

Universalization, verification, compliance, transparency, confidence-building measures and monitoring of scientific research and biotechnology remain crucial components of our shared journey towards a strengthened BTWC.

The Delegation of Ukraine echoes the calls for the establishment of a Science and Technology Review mechanism. Such a mechanism, equipped to identify and address both existing and emerging risks, is vital for navigating the complexities of dual-use research and biotechnology. In supporting this endeavor, we propose a model featuring an open-ended Scientific Advisory Group and a limited-size Scientific Reporting Committee.

Transparency, another cornerstone of effective implementation, plays a pivotal role in the success of the BTWC. Ukraine underscores the importance of sharing information on biological research, facilities, and activities among States Parties.

The Delegation of Ukraine advocates for a robust BTWC verification regime, recognizing its crucial role in ensuring transparency, compliance, and enforcement. A well-developed verification system, coupled with transparent practices and strong national implementation, is essential for fortifying the normative enforcement of the Convention.



In supporting the development of a mechanism for international cooperation and assistance under Article X, Ukraine underscores the importance of such initiatives in fostering global collaboration. Our nation has been actively involved in cooperation projects with fellow BTWC States Parties.

While recognizing the complexities surrounding regional dynamics, Ukraine emphasizes the need for consensus decisions when considering changes to existing arrangements, as witnessed in the case of Russia's withdrawal from the Eastern European Group. In this regard we will not recognize the establishment of a Group of One by Russia at the BTWC due to the potential impact on the geographical rotation of office holders and allocation of positions at BTWC meetings. As long as Russia continues its armed aggression against Ukraine, undermining the foundations of international disarmament and non-proliferation regimes, as long as Russia pursues its disruptive behavior in the disarmament bodies, it does not deserve to hold any leadership positions in conventional and deliberation bodies.

Distinguished Delegates,

The full-scale war against Ukraine continues to significantly deteriorate biosafety and biosecurity system of our country, maintained with the help of our partners. Due to Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, the civilian population and civilian infrastructure of Ukraine are being deliberately targeted and destroyed. The Russian invaders have destroyed the water and electricity supply systems in the Ukrainian occupied cities and towns. All this constitutes a serious imminent threat of dangerous diseases' outbreaks, in particular, outbreaks of anthrax, posing a severe threat to public health.

Let me reiterate that the cause of such outbreaks is the constant shelling of the Ukrainian territory by the Russian Federation, including places where cattle cemeteries are located, that leads to pathogen emission into the soil surface.

Besides, the breach by the Russian armed forces of the dam at Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant on 6 June 2023, the resulting overflow of Kakhovka reservoir and the flooding of downstream territories with heightened biohazard threat, have had a widespread and devastating impact on the environment and people.

We call upon the BTWC State Parties to properly address the actions by one State Party undermining the national biosecurity system of another State Party.

There is a need for more thorough monitoring of the situation in the territories of Ukraine temporarily occupied by Russia. The pathogens that were stored and maintained in the laboratories of the temporarily occupied regions of Ukraine (in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, parts of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions) remain the primary source of infections.

In this context, we demand from the Russian Federation to submit for the consideration of the BWC State Parties the information about the status of the Ukrainian biolaboratories that have been illegally seized by the Russian Federation since 2014 as well as about the status of biological agents stored there.

Distinguished Delegates,

In view of the fact that the Russian propaganda continues to spread its provocative narratives, we would like to once again reiterate that Russia's allegations regarding the so-called "military biological activities" of the United States as well as the development of the biological weapons on the territory of Ukraine are provocative, false and groundless.

We wish to recall the outcomes of the 9th Review Conference of the States-Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), held in November-December 2022, and the BTWC Official Consultative Meeting, held in August-September 2022, which have vividly demonstrated the twisted and sick nature of the Russian allegations. These allegations were convincingly debunked by Ukraine, United States and the overwhelming majority of other the BTWC States-Parties leaving Russia and its few satellites countries with nothing.

In the presence of delegations from 89 countries, Ukraine and the United States presented a thorough, in-depth series of presentations that strongly refuted Russia's absurd and false claims of U.S. biological weapons development and bio-labs in Ukraine.

Our technical experts unambiguously explained our cooperation and U.S. assistance related to public health facilities, biosafety, biosecurity, and disease surveillance as part of the broader U.S. Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. We demonstrated that the said activities are consistent with the provisions of the BTWC, particularly Article X, which promotes cooperation and assistance by the BTWC States-Parties.

Moreover, the BTWC States-Parties affirmed and supported Ukraine and the United States in this regard noting the importance of such work.

Let me remind you that the United Nations Security Council also left without reaction the respective distorted appeals of Russia, made in November 2022.

Bearing in mind the aforesaid, we would once again like to reiterate that the abovementioned procedure of the BTWC Official Consultative Meeting has been completed and could not be reopened or reconsidered under the provisions of the Article V of the BTWC no matter how much Russia would desire to further abuse the procedures of the Convention.

Mr. Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

In closing, Ukraine implores the international community to intensify diplomatic and political pressures on the Russian Federation, demanding an immediate cessation of its war of aggression against Ukraine. The wanton destruction of civilian infrastructure, deliberate targeting of the Ukrainian population, and the resulting deterioration of our country's biosafety and biosecurity systems require urgent action.

Looking into the future, we advocate for a forward-thinking approach that reinforces the principles of the BTWC and strengthens its mechanisms. In this challenging time, let us stand together against the scourge of biological warfare, committing ourselves to a future where the BTWC remains a beacon of global collaboration and resilience. By collectively reinforcing the Convention and fostering international cooperation, we can strive towards a safer and more secure world, free from the devastating impacts of biological weapons. The international community must remain resolute in its condemnation of aggression, holding those responsible accountable and working towards a future where the principles of the BTWC are upheld and strengthened.

I thank you, Chair, and look forward to fruitful deliberations during this important gathering.
