

**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**

14 December 2023

English only

2023 Meeting
Geneva, 11–13 December 2023

**Statement delivered by H.E. Ms. Tsholofelo Tsheole, Deputy
Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the
Republic of South Africa on the occasion of the General
Debate of the Meeting of States Parties of Biological Weapons
Convention (11 to 13 December 2023)**

Submitted by South Africa

Chairperson,

1. On behalf of the South African delegation, I would like to extend our congratulations to Ambassador Cristian Espinosa Cañizares on his election as Chairperson of the 2023 Meeting of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). I assure you of my delegation's full co-operation and support in ensuring a successful conclusion to our deliberations.
2. South Africa also associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished delegations of Nigeria and Azerbaijan on behalf of the Africa Group the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States Parties to the BWC, respectively.

Chairperson,

3. South Africa would like to reiterate its commitment to the full, effective, and balanced implementation of the BWC. The Convention makes an important contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security by preventing the threat posed by biological weapons, and in this regard South Africa would support any initiatives and proposals that aim to strengthen the Convention to ensure that our common goal of preventing the threat posed by biological weapons is achieved. As with other Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), no cause could ever justify the use of such weapons by any actor under any circumstances given the devastating humanitarian consequences.
4. My delegation supports the universalisation of the Convention and notes its importance, and in this regard welcomes the most recent ratification by South Sudan becoming the 185th State Party to the Convention. South Africa urges those States which have not yet joined the BWC to accede to the Convention without delay. My delegation further takes this opportunity to express its support for the principle of inclusivity, openness and transparency and acknowledges the importance of the participation of Observers in the framework of the BWC Convention.
5. The primary goal of my delegation is to continue to reinforce the responsible production, possession and trade of goods and advanced technologies in the biological field. South Africa, in so doing, remains committed to promoting the benefits which disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control hold for international peace and security, but also for sustainable development.

Chairperson,



6. On the issue of Article X of the Convention, South Africa believes that as we continue our endeavours to strengthen the BWC regime, it is vital that we should also focus on the developmental and co-operation features of the Convention. South Africa, as an African country and member of the Non-Aligned Movement, shares the view that Article X should promote the right of States Parties to participate in the exchange of equipment, materials and scientific information for peaceful purposes, and that States Parties in a position to do so, should contribute to the further development of scientific knowledge and discoveries in this field. South Africa strongly believes, in line with Article X of the Convention, that its implementation should not hamper economic and technological development of the peaceful uses of biological agents, but allow the beneficial elements of these agents to be developed to aid humanity.

7. My delegation believes in the importance of international cooperation and assistance in the combating and management of disease outbreaks. South Africa therefore believes that greater international cooperation and assistance is required to alleviate the burden of the threat posed by biological weapons. Initiatives such as the exchange in biological sciences and technology, the promotion of capacity building in the fields of disease surveillance, detection, and diagnosis, as well as the containment of infectious diseases, among many others, could continue to be further explored.

8. South Africa shares the view that a legally binding instrument, including appropriate verification measures would strengthen the Convention and improve its implementation. The negotiation of such an instrument should therefore remain a priority. We regret that consensus on this important matter remains elusive. However, in the absence of such negotiations, South Africa supports other means of strengthening the implementation of the Convention and believes that mechanism that aim to strengthen the Convention should not be ignored.

Chairperson,

9. South Africa has always highlighted the importance of improved planning in the BWC including on budgetary issues, and in this regard welcomes the extension of the Working Capital Fund, which has assisted in ensuring that there is cash flow during the year.

10. Lastly, my delegation welcomes progress made during the Intersessional Process and believes there is value in continuously taking steps to improve and strengthen the process. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the discussions that took place at the First, Second and Third Working Group Meetings on Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention that took place this year and looks forward to the successful conclusion of the Working Group meetings in 2024 and 2025.

11. In conclusion, Chairperson, South Africa would like to encourage all States Parties to the Convention to work together in achieving the goals of the Convention to eradicate the threat of biological weapons and diseases.

I thank you.
