

# **Working Group on the Strengthening of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction**

18 August 2023

English and Russian only

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## **Second Session**

**Geneva, 7-18 August 2023**

Agenda item 6

**Identifying, examining and developing specific and effective measures, including possible legally-binding measures, and making recommendations to strengthen and institutionalize the Convention in all its aspects within the mandate of the Working Group**

## **Questions of the Russian Federation to the United States and Ukraine regarding the compliance with their obligations under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BTWC) in the context of the activities of biological laboratories in the territory of Ukraine**

**Submitted by the Russian Federation**

### **I. Questions to Ukraine regarding compliance with obligations under Part 1 of Article I of the BTWC**

1. What activities with pathogenic biomaterials were carried out at the I.Mechnikov Anti-Plague Institute in Odessa in the period from 2017 to 2018, if, according to the report of the commission of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, there were over two thousand storage units of pathogenic biomaterials at that time, while in 2018 only one research work was officially conducted involving the tularemia strains in the collection of the Institute, and no report on the use of the collection for 2017 was submitted?
2. Why, as of December 28, 2018, there was no documented information at the I.Mechnikov Anti-Plague Institute in Odessa regarding the actual status of strains, and there was not an evidence base regarding the need to maintain a large number of pathogen test tubes with the same strains of different passages presented to the committee?
3. What is the reason for the choice of pathogens studied in Ukraine as part of the Threat Reduction Program? Why in a number of cases the nomenclature of studied pathogens is not related to relevant public health problems and can hardly be explained by preventive or protective purposes (for example the TAP-6 project to study the causative agent of glanders, cases of which have never been recorded by veterinary and sanitary and epidemiological services of Ukraine)? Why, under the conditions of the gravest state of sanitary and epidemiological well-being system, threatened by the spread of infections defeated in most countries of WHO European region and an unsatisfactory level of population immunization, in Ukraine the attention was not paid to actual health problems, but to anthrax, highly pathogenic influenza and other especially dangerous pathogens?



4. How should the accumulation of especially dangerous infection strains and their transfer to other countries help to improve the infectious disease situation?
5. Why is it necessary to store 422 containers with cholera bacteria at the I.Mechnikov Antiplague Institute in Odessa, if the genetic diversity of cholera-causing vibrios is limited to only two serogroups?
6. Why was emphasis placed on the study of naturally occurring and especially dangerous infections, which, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lists, are considered to be potential pathogens for biological weapons?
7. Why is the study of pathogens of especially dangerous infections, including those that overcome the protective effect of vaccines and possessing the ability to control them, instead of improving the system of epidemiological surveillance, developing antiepidemic action plans, conducting public health education, establishing the supply of vaccines and expanding immunization, the collection of information on the infection rate, biological samples of humans and their export, the export of national collections containing pathogenic microorganisms, considered to be a priority?

## **II. Questions to Ukraine regarding compliance with obligations under Part 2 of Article I of the BTWC**

8. What kind of life- and health-threatening research is referred to in the UP-8 project (Circulation of Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever virus and hantaviruses in Ukraine and the potential need for differential diagnosis of patients with suspected leptospirosis)?
9. What was the reason for the involvement of specialized U.S. military professionals in the research within the framework of the UP-2 project (Mapping of Especially Dangerous Infectious Diseases in Ukraine)? What tasks were solved by them in the course of the project? Considering that the epidemiological situation with anthrax in Ukraine remains favorable, why was the conducted research necessary and what are its true objectives?
10. What tasks were solved by the specialists of research organizations of the Ministry of Defense of the USA (researches were carried out by the specialists of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, the Naval Medical Research Institute) within the framework of fulfilled projects UP-1 (Implementation of geoinformation systems, remote detection and laboratory diagnostics while monitoring tularemia and anthrax in sanitaryepidemiological and veterinary practice in Ukraine) and UP-2? What justifies the necessity of their involvement as participants in research aimed at solving, as declared, "purely peaceful" tasks?
11. What is the reason for the interest of the Ukrainian company "Motor Sich" in the supply of an unmanned aerial vehicle "Bayraktar Akinji" (request of December 15, 2021)? How does this request correlate with Ukraine's obligations under Part 2 of Article I of the BTWC?

## **III. Questions for Ukraine regarding compliance with its obligations under Article IV of the BTWC**

12. For what reasons was the proper level of biological protection in organizations and institutions working with pathogens in Ukraine not ensured, and why is there a lack of national legislation regarding the control of particularly dangerous pathogens?
13. Why was the Ukrainian side not taking into account the recommendations of the Ukrainian security service in the context of ensuring the safety of Ukrainian bio-objects?
14. Why, despite the revealed gross violations of biological safety requirements and prerequisites for theft of pathogenic materials, were the activities of Ukrainian biolaboratories continued in the normal mode?

#### **IV. Questions for the United States regarding the compliance with its obligations under Article IV of the BTWC**

15. Is it an established practice for the U.S. Patent and Trademark Agency to grant, after peer review, patents for inventions directly related to the delivery and use of biological and toxin weapons?

16. How does the granting of patents on inventions, the technical description of which implies their use as a means of delivery of biological and toxin weapons, relate to the U.S. obligations under Article IV of the BTWC?

17. Does the United States consider the inventions featured in these patents to be tools that could be used to deliver biological and toxin weapons?

18. What explains the necessity of the centralization of collections and transfer to the U.S. of the strains of dangerous pathogens isolated in the territory of Ukraine, as stipulated by Article IV of the 2005 Agreement "On cooperation in the field of prevention of the spread of pathogens, technologies and knowledge that may be used in the development of biological weapons" (Agreement)?

19. What is the reason for giving the results of works, obtained within the framework of the implementation of the Threat Reduction Program in Ukraine, a limited and closed nature? How does this requirement under the Agreement contribute to transparency and confidence-building within the BTWC?

20. How was the U.S. assistance, as implemented, intended to ensure a sanitary and epidemiological well-being of the population of Ukraine? What are the objectives and goals of the U.S. assistance in the area of ensuring a sanitary and epidemiological well-being of the population of Ukraine? What are the key indicators of its effectiveness?

21. What public health indicators have improved over the past 10-15 years due to the U.S. assistance in Ukraine? Has the sanitary and epidemiological situation in Ukraine improved as a result of the interaction with the United States: has the incidence of infectious diseases decreased, has the immunization coverage increased, has testing for infections become more accessible, are there more specialists (epidemiologists, microbiologists, sanitary doctors), have there been new developments of tests and vaccines, has the recording of infectious diseases improved?

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