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# 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

8 December 2023

English only

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## Third Session

Geneva, 4-8 December 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**

## **Comments of the Ukrainian side with regard to the Working Paper BWC/WG/3/WP.3 submitted by the Russian Federation**

### **Submitted by Ukraine**

Ukraine rejects once again Russia's allegations regarding the so-called "medical biological activities" of the United States as well as the development of the biological weapons on the territory of Ukraine as provocative, false and groundless.

We would like to draw your attention that the outcome 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, have vividly demonstrated the twisted and sick nature of the Russian allegations. These allegations were convincingly debunked by Ukraine and United States as well as the overwhelming majority of the BTWC States-Parties leaving Russia and its few satellites countries with nothing.

Recalling the outcomes of the BTWC Official Consultative Meeting<sup>1</sup>, we would like to remind that in the presence of the delegations from 89 countries, Ukraine<sup>2</sup> and the United States<sup>3</sup> 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—and further support—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, with over 35 of the 42 countries which spoke noting the importance of such work.

The UN Security Council also left without reaction the respective distorted appeals of Russia, made in November 2022. However, the Russian delegation continues to pursue its

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<sup>1</sup> BWC/CONS/2022/3.

<sup>2</sup> BWC/CONS/2022/WP.46.

<sup>3</sup> BWC/CONS/2022/WP.22/Rev.1.



provocative narratives and to abuse the BTWC related and other important international fora for its own manipulative purposes.

Bearing in mind the aforesaid, we would once again like to reiterate that the above-mentioned 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 and its accomplices would desire it.

Ukraine strictly adheres to its own international obligations under the BTWC, never intended to produce and does not produce biological weapons neither alone or in cooperation with any other State-Party. The existing Ukraine's institutions and facilities of medical and biological profile are being used only for the sake of public health and veterinary protection. The respective Ukraine-U.S. cooperation has an exclusively peaceful nature aimed at strengthening the capabilities of medical and biological facilities in Ukraine to prevent and counteract the outbreaks of infectious diseases, as well as to provide necessary aid to the citizens of our country.

The manipulative Russian insinuations have been taking place simultaneously with Russia's attempts to hide and cover up its own circumvention of the BTWC provisions.

We would like to mention that the Russia initiative to establish the so-called "multi-purpose biomedical rapid reaction units" also did not find support among the BWTC States-Parties during the 9<sup>th</sup> BTWC Review Conference, held in November-December 2022.

We believe that Russia's disinformation about the biological labs is really a "false flag," aimed at creating a pretext to blame Ukraine and the U.S. for a possible biological provocation that Russia's own forces could carry out in Ukraine.

In this connection, we would like to draw your attention to the fact that in August 2022 the representatives of the Russian occupational authorities brought to the territory of the city of Melitopol (temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation, Zaporizhzhia Region of Ukraine) a number of mobile complexes of specialized anti-epidemic squads with the insignia "СПЕБ "Rosпотребнадзор" (СПЭБ "Роспотребнадзор") "Laboratory of highly contagious infections" and "Bacteriological Laboratory" which are designated for work with the pathogens of infectious diseases of I-IV groups of pathogenicity.

The said complexes are identified as Bio Safety Level 3 (BSL-3) mobile isolated laboratories, which could be used for work with the dangerous pathogens of infectious diseases (plague, anthrax, cholera, highly pathogenic avian influenza).

The abovementioned equipment was transferred to the territory of Ukraine illegally and we believe can be used in the provocations with biological weapons under the false flag.

This is another reason to strengthen common efforts to deter further escalation of Russia' aggression and to ensure that the Russian terrorist state is defeated in this war.

We wish to recall the terrorist act committed by Russia at the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant, which caused massive ecocide and had a devastating impact on the biosafety and biosecurity situation in the region. That attack is another example of the so-called "purity" of the intentions of the Russian Federation to promote the BTWC principles as well as to strengthen the BTWC as a whole.

We once again are calling upon the BTWC States Parties to increase pressure on Russia in order to make it immediately stop its war of aggression against Ukraine, to take effective measures to prevent abuse of the Convention's provisions and to elaborate viable mechanisms to ensure that such manipulative actions of Russia will not be tolerated in the future.