



Permanent Mission of Italy  
UN - Geneva

**Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention  
Ninth Review Conference**

**Agenda item 10(a): General debate**

**Delivered by Her Excellency Ms. Maria Tripodi,  
Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation**

*Geneva, 28 November 2022*

Mister President,

At the opening of this important meeting, let me stress how proud I am that our Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Bencini, has assumed the Chairmanship of this Review Conference. I would like to assure you that Italy will do its best to support his presidency in the next three weeks of work for the best possible outcome.

Italy aligns itself with the statement of the European Union to be delivered. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Global efforts to tackle biological risks are a momentous challenge, one that calls into question our common ability to forge adaptive responses to evolving threats, and even before our common endeavor to build resilient societies. Moreover, as noted, by the UN Secretary General and underlined by his High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, the international community needs to invest more resources in the international architecture dealing with biological weapons. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us how important it is to work together to improve global biosafety and biosecurity.

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention – the very first multilateral instrument to ban an entire category of weapons – represents a landmark achievement in global efforts to prevent, mitigate, and respond to the threat posed by biological and toxin weapons worldwide. While establishing a strong norm covering the entire biological weapons life-cycle, it paves the way for the acknowledgement of the importance of effective strategies (starting from the national level) aimed at preventing the deliberate use of biological agents and tackling emerging challenges related to public health.

This major instrument of global disarmament stands at a particularly delicate juncture today, inasmuch as it needs renewed and adequate tools to reinforce its effectiveness and dynamism. In this regard, we welcome all proposals aimed at enhancing the Convention's full operation, advancing its compliance, and promoting its universalization. It is time for us to draw a line on the more recent history of the BTWC, putting an end to reciprocal recriminations about its past and opening a new page for the future of the Convention. The Review Conference represents an extremely important opportunity and the international community cannot afford the price of a failure.

First of all, reviving the Convention entails new tracks to explore its verification and compliance issues, which until now have been relying uniquely on an confidence-based annual exchange of information: we welcome the first constructive signals of convergence among the membership on the need to advance this largely debated proposal through a gradual and inclusive process. Second, it involves an increased allocation of human and financial resources to ensure the overall implementation of its provisions, and improve technical coordination for its effectiveness. Third, it brings to the fore the importance of universalization efforts on which the Presidency has invested so much over the past month. In this respect, we would like to express our gratitude to the European Union for the dedicated funding in support of a series of regional workshop and seminars, organized by the ISU and aimed at raising awareness on the Convention's work.

Mister President,

In order to get the most out of the connection between health, safety, and security, we need to be aware of the extent to which technological and scientific advancements can affect our countries' preparedness to disease outbreaks and biological threats. An outcome that is within reach as long as we are able to share our knowledge capital for the benefit of other States Parties.

Hence, it must be a priority to adapt existing mechanisms of assistance and technical cooperation. Further advancing the outcomes of the Eight Review Conference, we must aim to achieve an even higher degree of operationalization of cooperation procedures, so as to promote awareness on biosafety and biosecurity issues, increase expertise in disease surveillance, and ultimately bring forward international efforts to share a culture of responsibility worldwide.

Let me reiterate, above all, how much Italy invests in gender equality - in line with the priorities identified by the United Nations Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament -, in a view to allowing the full empowerment of women and girls, and assessing potential sex-specific and gendered impacts of biological weapons.

Mister President,

Italy is firmly committed to the success of the IX Review Conference of the BTWC. This requires a joint commitment towards an outcome of the Conference that revives the Convention and guides our work in view of the next Review cycle. We wish to express our sincere appreciation for the contribution provided to our work by academia, civil society and international organizations, which we consider an invaluable source of knowledge and expertise. In this regard, I wish to remind you that this afternoon a special event will take place, with the participation of Under Secretary General Nakamitsu and representatives of the World Health Organization, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and the Gavi Vaccine Alliance.

The experience of the global community in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic holds many valuable lessons for strengthening the BTWC, especially on preparedness and international cooperation.

As long as we succeed in building upon those lessons, we will trace an inclusive path towards a successful outcome of this Review Conference.

Thank you.