

**International Conference**

**“Global Biosecurity Challenges: Problems and Solutions”**

**Sochi, Russian Federation 1-2 November 2017**

**‘BWC: What Future? Intersessional Programme of Work for 2018-2020’**

**By**

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**Sochi, 2 November 2017**

**Check against Delivery**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address you on the occasion of this International Conference on “Global Biosecurity Challenges: Problems and Solutions”. I commend the Russian Federation, particularly the Federal Service for Surveillance on Customer Rights Protection and Human Well-Being and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for jointly organizing this important event. Hosting the conference at this crucial juncture exemplifies the great importance that the Russian Federation attaches to the Convention. It also demonstrates the continued commitment of the Russian Federation to the BWC being one of the Convention’s three Depositary Governments.

I am privileged to have been elected as the Chair of the 2017 Meeting of States Parties of the Biological Weapons Convention that will convene in Geneva from 4 to 8 December 2017. It is in that capacity that I give these remarks today.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you will recall, the Eighth Review Conference took the decision that “States Parties will hold annual meetings” for the intersessional period from 2017 to 2020. Further, the MSP this year was specifically mandated to “seek to make progress on issues of substance and process for the period before the next Review Conference, with a view to reaching consensus on an intersessional process.”

Given that only one month remains until the opening of the MSP, this international conference has served as a very welcome opportunity to engage in deliberations regarding the way ahead.

Since the official confirmation of my appointment as Chair in early September, I have met with regional groups in order to have a good sense of how we should best prepare for the

meeting. Additionally, I have had a number of bilateral consultations in Geneva, which further helped me to get a better understanding of national policy priorities. Most recently, I have used the presence of many of the relevant individuals at the First Committee in New York to also reach out to delegations. In addition, in New York I also engaged with representatives of States not yet party to the Convention in order to encourage them to join this vital multilateral disarmament instrument.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

While we still have a formidable task ahead of us, the outcome of all these informal consultations give me a sense of optimism for the upcoming meeting. Let me briefly share why I believe that progress is feasible and how I see my role:

In preparation for the Eighth Review Conference, States Parties tabled many proposals – a record number of 83 Working Papers was submitted to the Review Conference and its preceding Preparatory Committee. Among them were also the Russian Federation’s proposals for the establishment of mobile biomedical units and putting in place a scientific and technological monitoring mechanism. While none of these proposals were adopted as part of a substantive programme of work for the next Intersessional Process, they nevertheless represent a highly valuable resource deserving careful consideration for the upcoming meeting in December.

I very much enjoyed yesterday’s and today’s sessions, where we had the opportunity to learn more about various proposals and discuss them again. Going further back, many useful proposals were also tabled based on the agenda items agreed at the Seventh Review Conference in 2011. The resultant discussions during the intersessional programme from 2012 to 2015 underline the expectation that the Convention should have a substantive inter-sessional process. I believe we can build on some of these

proposals and I hope that States Parties can identify areas in which their interests converge.

I am also pleased that the annual General Assembly resolution on the BWC, coordinated by Hungary, was adopted without a vote. The resolution represents an important stepping stone on the road to the MSP and maintaining consensus on the resolution injects a positive impetus into the preparations. I would like to thank Ambassador Gyorgy Molnar for his efforts in this regard.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that there is continued political interest in the BWC. Samoa deposited its instruments of accession to the BWC in Washington on 21 September, thereby becoming the 179<sup>th</sup> State Party to the Convention. Similarly, the relevance of the BWC is underlined by the fact that more than 49 representatives from 36 States Parties have applied for support to attend the MSP under the BWC Sponsorship Programme.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We all unequivocally share a common interest to strengthen the effectiveness of the Convention and improve its implementation. Rapidly evolving developments in science and technology, proliferation, together with the threat of use of biological agents or toxins for terrorist purposes, pose major challenges to the Convention and underline the urgency of this task.

Only political will and a strong commitment to multilateralism exhibited by all States Parties can help us to overcome these formidable challenges at the national, regional and international level. It is clear that identifying comprehensive solutions to these complex problems requires the contribution of all stakeholders with an interest in the Convention. Seeing such a diverse audience here at this conference - experts from States Parties,

representatives of various international organizations as well as members of civil society and academia - is vital for furthering the cause of the Convention.

There is an opportunity at the MSP in December, if political will is present, to move beyond the current situation and to set the BWC back on a substantive track with focused discussions on particular topics of interest and relevance to all States Parties. It is heartening that there is a clear desire to move ahead. In my capacity as Chair of the 2017 MSP, I stand ready and look forward to the constructive engagement of all States Parties during our annual meeting in December so that we can deliver successfully on the mandate given to the meeting by the Eighth Review Conference. This is a collaborative process and I therefore rely on your advice and support. I welcome all ideas and feedback you may have on any aspect of our work. My intention as Chairman is to listen carefully to everybody's views.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am convinced that this international conference here in Sochi has advanced the debate on how the BWC can address global biosecurity challenges. It also is my firm belief that this event will also lead to a number of concrete, valuable suggestions for the upcoming Meeting of States Parties. The conference here in Sochi allowed us to engage in very fruitful deliberations about the future of the BWC and its Intersessional Programme of Work for 2018-2020. I wish us all success and will do my utmost to contribute to a productive Meeting of States Parties in December.

Thank you.