



## **Meeting of the States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention**

### **Statement by Ireland**

**2 December 2014**

Thank you Mr Chair,

As this is the first time my delegation takes the floor allow me to congratulate you on your election to chair our meeting, to thank you and your team for the work you have already undertaken in preparation for this meeting in an open and transparent manner and to offer you the full cooperation and support of my delegation.

Ireland aligns itself fully with the statement to be delivered later today by the European Union and would like to add the following few remarks of particular importance to Ireland.

Mr. Chair,

Weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery remain among the most immediate and pressing global threats to the security of humanity. The First Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly called for the elimination of all nuclear weapons and all weapons adaptable to mass destruction. The primary motivation behind that resolution was humanitarian; it was the recognition that weapons of mass destruction, in any form, are a threat to the very survival of mankind.

Ireland regards the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), along with the CWC and NPT, as vital to the global community's efforts to ensure a world free from weapons of mass destruction. It is also inextricably linked to, and interacts with, initiatives for disease monitoring, detection, control and prevention. We would strongly encourage those States which are not yet members to join this important Convention which has been a cornerstone in making the development, possession, or use of these weapons unacceptable and illegitimate in the eyes of the international community.

Mr. Chair,

Ireland continues to give high priority to the further strengthening of the BTWC. As the world seeks to handle and mitigate the effects of the current Ebola crisis, we are reminded of the truly deadly impact which biological pathogens can have and the necessity for a strong, effective and universal BTWC.

Ireland believes that participation by all States Parties in the annual CBM exchange would represent a significant step towards strengthening confidence and compliance with the provisions of the Convention. Ireland would also support the establishment of appropriate national measures to strengthen implementation and in this regard we are pleased to be a co-sponsor of the paper which is being presented by our colleagues from the United States.

As UN Security Council Resolution 1540 reached its tenth anniversary this year, the importance of this resolution, which obliges States, inter alia, to refrain from supporting by any means non-State actors from developing, acquiring, manufacturing, possessing, transporting, transferring or using nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their delivery systems, cannot be denied. This year the world has borne witness to unspeakable acts of violence by groups such as ISIS and one thing is clear, we must do everything we can to ensure these groups can never attain weapons of mass destruction. The need to strengthen the BTWC becomes very self-evident when we look at it in this light.

The ongoing and tragic Ebola crisis in West Africa also reminds us of the urgency of this work and of the critical need for the international community to develop capacity both in relation to early warning and also in response to handling deadly disease outbreaks, wherever and wherever their origin. As we saw with the response to the use of Chemical Weapons in Syria in August 2013, the international community can work together extremely effectively when necessary.

Ireland is playing an active role in the response to the Ebola outbreak, working closely with partner Governments in the region, as well as through the UN system to ensure a coordinated and robust response. On the ground in West Africa, Ireland has provided support of over Euro 17 million this year to our partners in the affected countries. A key focus of this work is on strengthening health systems in two of the countries most affected by the disease.

Mr. Chair,

Ireland was pleased to participate in the BTWC meeting of experts which took place last August and welcomed the many substantive working documents which were presented at that meeting. As the pace of advancement in life sciences and technologies continues to grow rapidly, the Convention's relevance to ensuring that these advances are used for the good, and not to the detriment, of humanity, is ever more important.

As we begin our preparations for the 2016 Review Conference, Ireland believes that many of the ideas from our experts' meeting in August, which are also under consideration this week, provide us with innovative ideas and elements which can contribute to the identification of the means by which we can achieve our common goal, of strengthening this vital instrument of global security. Among these are issues around aid and knowledge exchange, building awareness in relation to bio-safety and security, the requirements for assistance, better transparency in implementation of export and import controls, and the need for better confidence building measures to demonstrate compliance with the convention. In the absence of consensus on legally binding verification measures, these are all avenues which States Parties could usefully pursue.

Ireland would support the holding of informal consultations, perhaps on a thematic basis, which could look at ways and means to strengthen the Convention as we look towards the Review Conference in 2016.

Thank you Mr. Chair