

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

**Statement by Ireland**

**December 2015**

Thank you Mr Chair,

Allow me firstly to congratulate you as Chair of the meeting, to thank you and your team for the work you have undertaken, and to offer you Ireland's full cooperation and support.

Ireland aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by the European Union and would like to add the following remarks in a national capacity.

As we approach the Eighth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention in 2016, it is timely to reiterate that Ireland regards this as a critical instrument in the global community's efforts to achieve a world free from weapons of mass destruction. Alongside the Chemical Weapons Convention and Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the BTWC forms a vital legal framework in the pursuit of safety for all the people of the world; and its universalisation must continue to be a priority for all states parties.

Biological threats will not discriminate amongst victims in our increasingly interconnected world. Our efforts must be truly global to ensure effective disease monitoring, detection, control and prevention. Through Irish Aid, Ireland's Development Cooperation programme and our Defence Forces, Ireland was active from the beginning of the crisis and contributed over US\$ 36 million in aid and assistance to the affected countries.

Following the outbreak Ireland also conducted two 'lessons learned' seminars which showed that strong and consistent leadership, coordination, rapid decision making and flexibility are crucial elements in the response to these crises. The belated success in limiting the spread of the virus also shows the results that can be achieved when the international community works together with a common cause, and provides another compelling argument for the need for a strong, effective, and universal BTWC.,

Yet another compelling reason for strengthening our convention relates to the unspeakable acts of violence which are being carried out by Non-State actors, and reports that some of these Non-State Actor groups are seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction. These developments should reinforce the resolve of the global community to adhere to UN Security Council Resolution 1540, and its forceful obligations on all States to prevent Non-State actors from acquiring or using weapons of mass destruction. The potential consequences of such groups obtaining these weapons should be enough to galvanise the international community to greater action.

Mr Chairman

Advances in biological sciences and biotechnology are occurring on a daily basis, and there are many opportunities for the exploitation of such advances for peaceful purposes. However, these advances also carry inherent risk, and require thoughtful and careful management. The BTWC reached 40 this year and has many successes to its credit. Nevertheless, it is clear that our Convention, like the science which it regulates, requires strengthened mechanisms to ensure that it can continue to be fit for purpose. Ireland is looking forward to discussing the various proposals which are being made in this regard at this meeting of State's Parties, and also to next year's preparatory and review conferences.

Ireland urges all State's Parties to increase mutual trust, and to generate transparency by submitting completed returns and by making them public.

National Measures to implement the Treaty are also important. Ireland's co-sponsored a paper presented by our colleagues from the United States last year. We will continue to support all good faith efforts to increase compliance, further strengthen and universalise the BTWC. We would like to thank the ISU for its work and support to the Member States in meeting their commitments under the Treaty.

Mr Chair,

Ireland has long been a supporter of all multilateral instruments of non-proliferation and disarmament, from the early negotiations on the Non-Proliferation Treaty to more recently, the Ottawa Convention on Anti-personnel landmines, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Arms Trade Treaty.

The BTWC remains the sole internationally recognised legal instrument in the pursuit of disarmament and non-proliferation of biological and toxin weapons, and, as we look toward the 2016 Review conference, we, as states parties, should all make every effort to ensure its continuing relevance and effectiveness.

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