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First Committee

14th meeting

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New York

Official Records

Chair: Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands)

The meeting was called to order at 5.10 p.m.

Agenda items 88 to 105 (continued)

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions and decisions submitted under all disarmament and related international security agenda items

The Chair: We will now hear from the remaining speakers on the list under the cluster “Other weapons of mass destruction”. Delegations are kindly reminded of the time limits of five minutes for national statements and seven minutes for group statements.

I call on the representative of Hungary to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/70/L.12.

Mr. Hetesy (Hungary): I take the floor to introduce, under agenda item 104, draft resolution A/C.1/70/L.12, entitled “Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction”.

The draft resolution was submitted for the Committee’s consideration on 12 October, with consensus on the text reached on 16 October. At this juncture, let me express my gratitude to all delegations that took part in the negotiations for their cooperation, proposals and their support.

This year’s draft resolution retains all elements of resolution 69/67, which was adopted by consensus in 2014. It also includes the following substantive changes:

an update to the number of States parties in the second preambular paragraph, which now stands at 173; and extended language in sixth preambular paragraph on international cooperation. Paragraph 2 is now merged with the previous paragraph 3, and amended in order to reflect the results of the intersessional process so far. Finally, a new paragraph 9 underscores the importance of proper preparation for the upcoming eighth Review Conference, to be held in 2016. Finally, the change in paragraph 11 ensures that the agenda item will appear on the agenda of the seventy-first session.

Hungary wishes to remain the sole sponsor of the draft resolution. It is the hope of my delegation that, as in the past, this year again the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the representative of Poland to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/70/L.27.

Mr. Przeniosło (Poland): In the debate on other weapons of mass destruction, Poland traditionally attaches particular attention to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). In that context, we welcome the fact that the number of States parties to the CWC is still growing, making the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) one of the most universal international organizations. We furthermore welcome the recent accession of Angola to the CWC, which brings the total number of its States parties to 192.

Poland commends the OPCW and United Nations staff for the successful completion of the work of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Mission for the

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Elimination of the Chemical Weapons Programme of the Syrian Arab Republic. The undertaking was perhaps the greatest challenge in the history of the OPCW, which has consumed not only financial but also human resources. We hope that the last two chemical-weapons production facilities in Syria will be verified as destroyed by the end of this month and that any remaining chemical-weapon precursors will be removed from Syria by the end of this year. We stress the importance of fully verifying that the declaration and related submissions of the Syrian Arab Republic are accurate and complete, as required by the CWC. That is of particular significance, as the Chemical Weapons Convention is a regime based on mutual confidence.

At the same time, Poland has to note a number of serious concerns with regard to CWC implementation over the past year. The fact-finding mission established by the Director-General of the OPCW has confirmed with a high degree of confidence that chlorine was used as a chemical weapon in some attacks in Syria. That development serves to underscore the need for the General Assembly to consistently condemn any use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances. It is of the utmost importance that the OPCW fact-finding mission continue its work of collecting and analysing relevant information. At the same time, Poland welcomes the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 2235 (2015), which established the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. Poland hopes that the Mechanism will allow for the identification of perpetrators of chemical-weapon use. We call on all United Nations States Members to support the activities of the Joint Investigative Mechanism.

In addition, the reports about the use of toxic chemicals by non-State actors in Iraq add a sense of urgency to the transformation of the OPCW into an agency capable of decreasing chemical threats. Poland welcomes the discussion on the future of the OPCW initiated by the Director-General. We hope that all State parties to the CWC will take an active part in it. Poland believes that article X, on assistance and protection, and article XI, on the international cooperation on the Convention, should be core drivers for the OPCW transformation in the coming years. Those efforts should be supplemented by an enhancement of the OPCW verification mechanism to ensure the non-re-emergence of chemical weapons.

As in previous years, Poland now introduces draft resolution A/C.1/70/L.27, on CWC implementation.

The draft resolution underlines the exceptional role of the CWC in the area of disarmament, preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons as well as promoting international cooperation and protection against chemical weapons. However, as a sponsor of the draft resolution, in the course of consultations, this year we were again confronted with many divergent views from Member States. Finding middle ground proved to be challenging, but we are confident that we made every effort to accommodate different views to the extent possible. It is our firm belief that the text I am introducing is balanced and reflects the current status of the implementation of the CWC, while building upon discussions and agreements reached at the OPCW in The Hague.

We hope that our efforts as the sponsor will be taken into account and that a compromise text of the draft resolution will be accepted by the First Committee. The delegation of Poland requests that the draft resolution be adopted without a vote.

Ms. Manjua (Pakistan): Pakistan aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/70/PV.13).

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) represent two important pillars of the international security architecture. Both Conventions have reinforced global norms against the production, possession and use of those weapons. Accordingly, the instruments have made an important contribution to the goal of general and complete disarmament.

The success of the Conventions confirms the continued relevance of cooperative multilateralism. That unique feat also serves to reaffirm the vitality and values of treaties negotiated multilaterally on the basis of inclusiveness, good faith and equality, while taking into account the security interests of all States. It is the spirit of cooperative multilateralism that can and should guide the international community in navigating and addressing new and emerging challenges in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Pakistan shares the concerns arising from the threat of the possible production and acquisition of chemical and biological weapons by State and non-State actors. The early elimination of remaining stockpiles by possessor States is also essential. Pakistan continues to believe that sensitive technologies and materials must be adequately controlled to ensure their use for

peaceful purposes alone. However, that objective cannot justify practices and cartels that hinder legitimate trade in chemicals, equipment and technology among States parties for demonstrably peaceful purposes. It is vital to restore balance and even-handedness in the implementation of the Conventions, and Pakistan remains fully committed to ensuring their full and effective implementation.

Pakistan remains strongly opposed to the use of chemical weapons by anyone and under any circumstances. We have repeatedly condemned the use of chemical weapons in Syria. It is indeed reprehensible that chemical weapons could still be used in the twenty-first century. Perpetrators of such heinous crimes must be held accountable. Pakistan welcomes the significant progress achieved in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons and the destruction of the chemical-weapon production facilities. Pakistan also takes note of the Director-General's note with regard to the establishment of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. We hope that the Mechanism will conduct its mission in an objective, impartial and comprehensive manner.

Over the years, Pakistan has interacted closely with and extended full cooperation to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on a range of activities. In active collaboration with the Technical Secretariat, we have hosted several regional and international capacity-building courses in Pakistan. A subregional assistance and protection centre has been established in Pakistan to serve as a centre of excellence for countries in the region. Pakistan is also one of the first countries to support the national authority mentorship programme and is closely sharing with another State party its national experience in implementing the CWC.

With regard to future priorities of the OPCW, it is important to faithfully adhere to the original intent reflected in the Convention. The CWC establishes a hierarchy of threats that different types of chemicals and related facilities pose to the object and purpose of the Convention. Pakistan stresses the need for advancing the goals of the CWC in a comprehensive, balanced and non-discriminatory manner.

The provisions of the Convention relating to international cooperation and assistance are essential to keep a large number of States without chemical industry

engaged with the work of the OPCW. Cooperation in the field of assistance and protection provides a platform to a large number of developing countries to improve their capacities against the use or threat of use of chemical weapons.

Pakistan attaches great importance to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We remain committed to implementing all provisions of the Convention by taking practical steps in that regard. Pakistan ratified the BWC in 1974 as a non-possessor State. We have instituted comprehensive legislative, regulatory and administrative measures to regulate life sciences in Pakistan and to strengthen our export control systems on biological agents and toxins, bringing them at par with the best international standards.

Pursuant to our Export Control Act 2004, in March 2015 the Government of Pakistan issued a revised control list of goods, technologies, material and equipment related to nuclear and biological weapons and their delivery systems. The control list, first promulgated in 2005, has been periodically revisited. Early this year, the list was further revised and contained a total of 408 changes and amendments with a view to fully harmonizing it with the control lists of the Australia Group, as well as the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Missile Technology Control Regime.

Threats posed by the dual-use nature of biotechnology are real. Recent advances in synthetic biology raise immediate concerns related to ethics, safety and security. States should therefore employ the utmost transparency- and confidence-building measures during all their activities related to that form of biology. The malicious use of bioscience can kill humans, animals and plants, trigger wars and disrupt infrastructure. Addressing those issues necessitates continued engagement with the scientific, medical, commercial and educational communities. A coordinated approach needs to be developed for the prevention of such misuse.

The outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa last year demonstrated that such outbreaks could not be contained or localized geographically, and hence required a global response, especially in the form of cooperation and assistance to developing countries. A balance must be struck between addressing new threats and keeping avenues open for assistance and cooperation.

The potential dual nature of the emerging technologies in that area should not be used as a pretext for proscribing or restricting their availability to developing countries. No steps should be taken to curb legitimate scientific inquiry or economic activity.

The absence of a dedicated verification mechanism for the Biological and Toxins Weapons Convention to ensure compliance with the Convention also remains a source of concern. The Secretary-General's mechanism is the only existing tool for investigation after an actual use of biological and toxin weapons has occurred. However, the mechanism is not a substitute for a dedicated verification mechanism for the Convention that would ensure that biological and toxin weapons were never developed, produced, stockpiled or otherwise acquired or retained, thereby precluding their use by the States parties.

Ms. Kartika Wulandari (Indonesia): Indonesia associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/C.1/70/PV.12) and would like to add the following points in its national capacity.

As a State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), Indonesia reiterates its full support for the implementation of the CWC as the only comprehensive treaty that bans an entire category of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), thereby making it a model treaty for the abolishment of other such weapons. In that regard, Indonesia calls upon all States that have not yet done so to ratify the CWC as soon as possible. While we wish to achieve a world without chemical weapons, Indonesia attaches great importance to the promotion of the use of chemicals for peaceful purposes. In that light, it is essential that States parties to the CWC ensure the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the plan of action on article XI so that the benefits of the peaceful uses of chemicals are shared by all parties for their economic and technological development.

With regard to Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), there is an urgent need to resume multilateral negotiations to conclude a non-discriminatory legally binding protocol in order to ensure the sustainability of the Convention, in particular by strengthening its verification system. Indonesia further stresses the need to promote international cooperation and assistance and exchanges in toxins, biological agents, equipment

and technology for peaceful purposes without discrimination.

Indonesia is of the view that there is a significant need to create a closer partnership between experts in biosecurity and public health to address current and future threats to public health and safety. In that regard, we see the importance of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the BWC working closer to produce a more integrated approach to biosecurity and biosafety. In line with our view on the importance of the integrated approach on biosecurity and biosafety, a framework of cooperation on biosecurity should not only emphasize the implementation of the BWC but also be relevant to WHO-based regulation. In that regard, the main elements that may be important to consider for further deliberations are, among others, a prohibition on the transfer of biological weapons, stricter regulations and oversight on the use of biological materials for peaceful purposes, and the integration of important elements in the relevant multilateral agreed frameworks.

The threat of terrorists' acquisition of WMDs and their means of delivery has become more imminent than ever. Indonesia calls upon all Member States to increase their efforts to address that threat, in particular by strengthening prevention measures, both at national and international levels.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate Indonesia's strong conviction that efforts to resolve the issue of the acquisition of WMDs by non-State actors will be relevant only if done in an inclusive manner, namely, by the General Assembly, as well as through strengthened coordination in regional and other multilateral forums.

Mr. Denктаş (Turkey): Since Turkey's clear position on and its strong support to nuclear disarmament have already been expressed in this room during the relevant thematic discussion, today I will elaborate on my country's stance vis-à-vis two particular categories of weapons of mass destruction, namely, chemical and biological/toxin weapons.

Turkey is a party to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC), which are all important components of the global system against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In full observance of its international commitments, Turkey does not possess or develop any such weapons, nor does it conduct any research on them.

Turkey reiterates its call for a wider adherence to, and the effective implementation of, these Conventions. We will continue to actively support efforts aimed at promoting the implementation and universalization of these instruments.

The existence of chemical weapons in the world, and especially in the Middle East, has been a major concern for Turkey, its region and the international community as a whole. Unfortunately, chemical weapons were used during three conflicts in our immediate neighbourhood in the past three decades, the most recent case being Syria.

The reports of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and the fact-finding mission undertaken in 2014 by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) clearly indicated that chlorine gas was used as a chemical weapon systematically and repeatedly by the Syrian regime within a 10-day period in April 2014, which was a grave breach of the CWC and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). Emboldened by the absence of firm action by the international community, the perpetrators of those attacks continued their campaign of mass punishment by chemical weapons against their own citizens, as the third report of the OPCW fact-finding mission clearly established.

We observed repeated use of chemical weapons, in the form of chlorine and/or phosgene gas, in and around Idlib city during the course of March and April 2015. That led to the adoption of Security Council resolution 2235 (2015), and thus the establishment of the United Nations-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism.

We hope that the Joint Investigative Mechanism will serve as an effective instrument in holding accountable those responsible for these horrific acts. It is our firm conviction and expectation that the Mechanism will be able to address the OPCW fact-finding mission reports without delay. We also would like to reaffirm that it is Turkey's solemn expectation that all allegations of the use of chemical weapons in our neighbourhood will be thoroughly investigated and that perpetrators be brought to justice.

With respect to the allegations one country voiced this morning against Turkey and others, I would like to make the following remarks.

Syria, which has been characterized as a State sponsor of terrorism, has a well-known record of aiding

terrorist organizations and for providing safe havens for terrorist leaders. In that regard, the representative of such a regime, which is also responsible for the flourishing of Da'esh and cooperating with that terrorist organization, is not in a position to lecture anyone in this room on counter-terrorism. Today, as in the past, Turkey is combating terrorism of all kinds, including Da'esh, the Kurdish Workers Party, the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front and others. Our counter-terrorism efforts, which are always in line with democratic principles, the rule of law and international human rights standards, as well as our contribution to international cooperation to that end, are well known by our partners.

Turkey also attaches great importance to the BWC, its universalization and full implementation. This year is the fortieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention, which makes the Meeting of States Parties to be held from 14 to 18 December more important. The spread and transfer of dual-use goods and technology that can be used to produce biological weapons and the possibility of their falling into the hands of terrorists are major concerns for the international community. Coupled with other weapons of mass destruction, the fact that those agents are so easy to obtain has made such concerns all the more significant.

Confidence-building measures (CBMs) remain an important instrument for promoting the purposes of the BWC. Although the submission of reports has considerably improved, it has not yet increased to the desired level. CBM reports are valuable tools for mutual understanding and transparency. We should strive to make tangible use of that source of information.

We also believe that scientific and technological developments should also be taken into account. Awareness of the innovations in life sciences and their implications for the BWC is necessary to address the complex challenges in this area.

Unfortunately, unlike the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention lacks a verification regime. We consider that the development of such a mechanism — to the extent possible, of course — would contribute to the strengthening of the Convention's effectiveness.

The international community must continue to do its best to prevent the acquisition of biological and chemical warfare agents by terrorists, other unauthorized actors and even, in certain cases, irresponsible States, and

for their stockpiles to be destroyed. In that context, the universalization and effective implementation of both the CWC and the BWC must be a priority for us all. We call on all countries to ratify and implement those two important instruments. We also support the strengthening of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which is a key instrument in preventing the acquisition by non-State actors of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. In that context, regional approaches that pave the way for eventual universality should be utilized.

Turkey has been actively promoting the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We would now once again like to echo the general sense of disappointment that the 2012 conference could not be held, and our expectation for it to be convened as soon as possible. We urge all States in the region to participate in those efforts in a spirit of cooperation and flexibility.

Mr. Špokauskas (Lithuania): Lithuania aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/C.1/70/PV.13). I would now like to elaborate on some matters of particular importance to Lithuania.

In August 2013, when the use of sarin gas in Ghouta left hundreds of Syrians dead and many more injured, a rare consensus emerged within the international community and led to the destruction of the vast majority of declared chemical weapons. While the verification of Syria's chemical weapons declaration is ongoing and some very important questions remain, the efforts of the international community as well as devoted work by the joint mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations deserve a special expression of gratitude.

Yet despite all those efforts, Ghouta was not the last time chemical weapons were used in Syria. The attacks — this time with barrel bombs filled with chlorine gas — continued in Talmenes, Al-Tamanah, Kafr Zita, Idlib and elsewhere. Again, civilians died or were maimed. The fact-finding mission appointed by the OPCW Director-General subsequently concluded that a toxic chemical, chlorine, was used systematically and repeatedly as a weapon in villages in northern Syria. Several investigations by the fact-finding mission remain ongoing.

In August, the Security Council took a momentous decision when it adopted resolution 2235 (2015), establishing the Joint Investigative Mechanism tasked with identifying individuals, entities, groups or Governments that perpetrate, organize, sponsor or are otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria. Lithuania co-sponsored and voted in favour of the resolution, which provides a clear path to identifying those responsible and sending a clear message that such crimes will not be tolerated. In that regard, we look forward to receiving the first report by the Joint Investigative Mechanism. At the same time, while the attribution of responsibility is an important step, it cannot be the last step, as the perpetrators of those atrocious acts must be brought to justice.

Lithuania continues to emphasize the need to address challenges resulting from sea-dumped chemical munitions. On 20 December 2013, the General Assembly adopted resolution 68/208, negotiated in the Second Committee on cooperative measures to assess and increase awareness of environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea. The text encourages outreach efforts to assess and increase awareness of the issue, promotes voluntary sharing of information and invites Member States to consider providing assistance and the sharing of expertise. The resolution also invites the Secretary-General to continue to seek views on issues related to environmental effects of chemical weapons dumped at sea, in particular with a view to exploring the possibility of establishing a database that would contain voluntarily shared information. The report of the Secretary-General is due to be issued in 2016, and we intend to revisit this issue in the Second Committee next autumn.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Ibrahim (Syrian Arab Republic): I would like to respond to the baseless allegations made and misleading fallacies set forth by the representative of the Turkish regime.

A simple Google search for the link between the Turkish regime and terrorism in Syria and Iraq, in particular between the regime in Turkey and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), will provide us with millions of hits and facts with regard to the ideological ties between the Ankara regime and ISIS. Among those

reports, many present facts concerning the Turkish regime providing ISIS and other terrorist groups in Syria with chemical substances and materials, including sarin and chlorine, among others, that are used against the citizens in Syria and the soldiers of the Syrian army. What the representative of Turkey said this morning is misleading. He is merely denying that his country is a main supporter of terrorism in the region. That support is not only affecting Syria and the Middle East, but also its European neighbours. He is using those kinds of fallacies for mere political reasons and agendas that target the Syrian Government.

Finally, I would like to say that for us in Syria and for the First Committee, we should know that the city and epicentre where the ISIS leaders reside is not actually in those that they control in Syria and Iraq, but in Ankara. Rather, undercover agents are working in Syria and Iraq. The leaders and caliphs of ISIS and related terrorist groups are in Ankara and not in Syria or Iraq.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.