
Formal Consultative Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

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Item 6 of the agenda

Respective outstanding questions by the Russian Federation to the United States and to Ukraine concerning the fulfilment of their respective obligations under the Convention in the context of the operation of biological laboratories in Ukraine

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Yurii Klymenko, Head of the Delegation of Ukraine at the Formal Consultative Meeting of the States Parties to the BTWC

Submitted by Ukraine

Dear Mr. Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

1. I have the honor to address this assembly, as the BTWC is one of the most important international instruments of the WMD non-proliferation regime.
2. At the same time, I deeply regret that we are meeting here this week in connection with known circumstances to discuss and consider in a serious manner purely manipulative, absurd, and groundless russian narratives related to the activities in the public health laboratories in the territory of Ukraine.
3. Nevertheless, for us the importance of preserving the integrity of the BTWC had prevailed, and we have agreed to hold the meeting.

Mr. Chairperson,

4. It is very obvious that the so-called russian evidence is null and void. It has been concocted during the unjustified and unprovoked full-scale war of aggression of the russian federation against Ukraine, one of the components of which is a powerful disinformation activity. The origin of the so-called evidence is highly doubtful, taking into account, among other things, russian propensity to fake and robbery on a grand scale. Russia is notorious for its activities of deceit, sabotage and cover-ups.
5. At the same time, this russian behavior creates a very dangerous precedent, since following its aggressive politics the kremlin might apply one day in future the same approach to other BTWC's States Parties in our and other regions of the globe, whereto it decides to bring the so-called «russian world», or whose internationally recognized borders it would like to change, desperately finding for it any pretext.
6. Russia's accusations addressed to Ukraine and the U.S. are aimed, first of all, at creating artificial grounds to justify unleashed by it full-scale war of aggression against



Ukraine, at diverting attention of the international community from egregious crimes committed by russia in the territory of our independent and sovereign state.

7. And these massive crimes are very appalling. Investigations into more than 30000 war crimes and crimes of aggression committed since February 24 have been launched so far. Among them – the cases of killing of over 7000 civilians, including 377 children. These figures are growing daily due to unceasing heavy shelling, bombardments, and airstrikes by russia on the Ukrainian public and residential areas, schools, hospitals, and critical infrastructure facilities. Thousands of educational and medical institutions have been damaged and destroyed. For the first time in history, civil nuclear facilities such as Zaporizhzhia NPP and Chernobyl NPP have been turned by russia into military targets and springboards for the russian army in breach of the NPT provisions. The aggressor state has turned into ruins and ashes many Ukrainian flourishing cities, such as Mariupol, Bucha, Borodianka, Irpin, Melitopol, Sievierodonetsk and many others, wherein hundreds of decomposing corpses of Ukrainian civilians cynically slaughtered by russian invaders' bullets, their artillery and missile attacks, have been remaining unburied since this spring. The russian invaders have destroyed the water and electricity supply systems in the Ukrainian occupied cities and towns. There is a complete absence of epidemiological control in the areas, temporally controlled by the russian occupiers. All this poses a serious imminent threat of cholera and other dangerous diseases' outbreaks.

8. Since the beginning of its incursion into the Ukrainian territory in 2014, Russia spares no efforts to destroy, among other things, Ukraine's national system of biosafety and biosecurity maintained with the help of our international partners. Some crucial components of it have been brutally pulled out by the aggressor state long ago, namely the Ukrainian anti-plague station in Crimea, the Crimean republican diagnostic laboratory in the city of Simferopol, Donetsk and Luhansk regional sanitary and epidemiological stations. The Ukrainian anti-plague station has been the reference-laboratory of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine on diagnostics and identification of Vibrio cholera and other pathogens, as well as served as our national Centre for indication of biological pathogenic agents for Crimea and other regions of Ukraine. Thanks to technical assistance of the United States, the Luhansk regional laboratory for veterinary medicine has been upgraded to BSL2 level. Now these stations and laboratories are under russian occupation; their costly equipment obtained owing to international assistance has been illegally usurped by the aggressor.

9. All this is directly related to the BTWC scope, and our Formal Consultative Meeting. This is its background. All this, if you wish, are «touches to the portrait» of the BTWC State Party, which requested to convene the meeting invoking Article V of the Convention because of the activities in the public health laboratories in the territory of Ukraine.

Distinguished delegates,

10. Today the international community experiences the fundamental challenge in a form of russian disinformation that aims to undermine the foundations of peace, humanity, and multilateralism.

11. Nowadays, we are faced with the most sinister manifestation of disinformation warfare, employed by russia in its aggression against Ukraine. As russian bombs destroy our cities and russian weapons kill our people, moscow's lies are pushed around to justify the unjustifiable. Hatred, lies and propaganda of war have all come together in a hybrid symbiosis of evil that aims to vindicate the atrocities, pervert the reality and mess with hearts and minds of humanity.

12. Today we find ourselves in regrettable situation, when the nuclear weapon state, party to the BTWC Convention is trying to abuse the credibility and integrity of the Convention and its mechanisms by producing fakes and disinformation on the BTWC compliance by other States Parties.

13. Kremlin has never managed to explain to the international community why it unleashed a bloody full-scale war of aggression against peaceful Ukraine. It has been inventing different absurd allegations, in particular, about the development in the Ukrainian

public health laboratories of biological weapons, which are more akin to hallucinations. And this is a case for specialists of another profile rather than the BTWC's experts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

14. Believe me, because of their complete absurdity, the pages long delirium of Putin's diplomats and their apprentices do not deserve at all your attention and time. But it is now the right time for all of us to think about how we could protect our Convention from being misused and manipulated for aggressive purposes.

15. At the same time, for the sake of integrity of the Convention, let me make it crystal clear and once again recall a long-known truth – Ukraine has never ever developed, produced, or stored alone or together with someone else biological or chemical weapons. It has never ever had such intentions. It does not have them now and will not have them in future.

16. Ukraine does not possess a corresponding infrastructure for biological weapons' development and production in its territory. We do not have laboratories with the biosafety level BSL-4, allowing to conduct research, related to biological weapons. The existing in Ukraine public health laboratories are functioning exclusively for the sake of public health and veterinary protection; they diagnose infections and preserve collections of pathogens of infectious diseases.

17. Since 1975, Ukraine has been a Party to the BTWC, a responsible Party. Its ratification preceded by the confirmation by all other Parties and depositories of the Convention, including the Russian Federation, of the absence of biological weapons in the territory of Ukraine as well as facilities for their production. Our state has been fully complying with its obligations under the BTWC; annually Ukraine submits its reports to the Implementation Support Unit.

18. The Ministry of Health of Ukraine has timely and decisively refuted the information circulated by the Russian propaganda machinery right after unleashing by Russia of the full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine about the alleged "emergency stripping of the military biological program funded by the U.S. Department of Defense".

19. As the Ministry of Health has stressed, there are no so-called "American laboratories" in Ukraine. All national laboratory facilities in our country perform a single function – the detection and identification of pathogens of infectious diseases that have significant epidemic potential and/or international significance and are subject to international health regulations.

20. Ukraine's cooperation with the United States and other partners is entirely peaceful and aimed at increasing the capacity of medical and biological facilities in Ukraine to prevent and counteract the outbreaks of infectious diseases as well as to provide respective aid to the citizens of our country.

21. There is nothing secret about the Agreement between the Ministry of Health of Ukraine and the U.S. Department of Defence Concerning Cooperation in the Area of Prevention of Proliferation of Technology, Pathogens and Expertise That Could Be Used in the Development of Biological Weapons, signed in 2005. By the way, according to our knowledge, similar agreements have been in force in Russia, Georgia and in some other countries.

22. The above-mentioned Ukraine-U.S. document is freely available; in particular, it is posted on the Verkhovna Rada's (Parliament) of Ukraine website. All the results of the scientific research and joint projects can be easily found on open information resources. The overwhelming majority of the obtained scientific results has been presented at the international conferences.

23. As part of the implementation of the Agreement, due to technical and financial support of the USA, eight monotypic laboratories have been built, modernized, and commissioned on the basis of seven regional Centres for Disease Control and Prevention of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, as well as the Republican Laboratory Centre of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. One of these laboratories has been taken over as a result of occupation of Crimea.

24. Afterwards, the relevant cooperation has been carried out in accordance with the Memorandum between the Ministry of Health of Ukraine and "Black and Veatch Special Projects Corp.", aimed at strengthening the system of epidemiological surveillance of diseases by establishing an electronic integrated disease surveillance system. This system made it possible to make management decisions to protect the population from epidemics.

25. The Ukrainian side aligns itself with the "Response by the United States of America to the request by the Russian Federation for a Consultative Meeting under Article V of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC)" circulated in advance to our meeting.

26. In our own national presentations we will provide with additional focused, detailed and professional information proving the far-fetched nature of the Russian allegations.

Distinguished delegates,

27. The effectiveness of international interaction has been unequivocally confirmed by the fact that the Ukrainian medical and biological facilities involved in cooperation with foreign partners became a core part of the sanitary-epidemiological surveillance system in Ukraine and the leading and exemplary institutions in countering the COVID-19 pandemic. Such cooperation and assistance under Article X of the Convention is the best illustration of the relevance of this international instrument and of its provisions related to the promotion of the peaceful use of biological science and technology to prevent the global spread of diseases.

28. The very fact that certain Ukrainian specialized medical and scientific research institutions continue to work in accordance with standard protocols is perceived by the Russian propaganda machinery as a proof of the development of biological weapons by our state. Any international cooperation in the field of biosecurity, as it envisaged by the BTWC, is presented by Russia as indisputable evidence of overseas control and financing of the development of biological weapons and the use of the territory of Ukraine as a testing ground.

29. While considering the Russian deceitful allegations about the development of biological weapons in the Ukrainian laboratories, it should be taken into account that since 2014 we insistently requested the Russian Federation at the BTWC fora to inform the international community about the location of the biomaterials from the occupied Ukrainian public health laboratories and their use. In response we heard only the growls to not politicize the discussion. Now we reiterate our demand to Russia to provide us with such a data. We hope that other States Parties to the BTWC will vigorously support us in that.

30. The Ukrainian side considers the above-mentioned Russian accusations not only as a clumsy attempt to justify unjustifiable – a full-scale war of aggression against peaceful Ukraine, but also as the background for further Russian provocations in the territory of Ukraine with the eventual false flag use of biological warfare agents developed, inter alia, from the occupied Ukrainian laboratories' biomaterial.

31. Therefore, Ukraine appeals to the international community to exercise the utmost vigilance and exert the necessary pressure to prevent Russia's insidious plans with bioweapons. And Russia, as you know, duly inherited from the Soviet Union the relevant military programs, as well as research and development results.

32. The covert activities at the "48 Central Scientific Research Institutes" of Kirov, Sergiev Posad, and Yekaterinburg of the Ministry of Defense of Russia, among others, cannot but cause great additional concern. One of the alleged activities therein, for instance, is related to the research of pathogen of Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis, which according to experts has a time predicted striking effect.

33. Russia, according to data from open sources, has, as of July 2022, several institutions – the above-mentioned "48 Central Research Institutes" and the State Research Center of Virology and Biotechnology VECTOR – with the laboratories of the highest biosafety level BSL-4. These facilities' activities are not transparent, and the information about part of research is classified.

34. And this is, as we understand, just a tip of the iceberg.

35. Therefore, we strongly believe that the international community has the full right to demand from the Russian Federation to provide clarifications regarding the alleged activities at the above-mentioned facilities and take relevant confidence-building steps. Although it is very unlikely that a Russian reaction would be different from bullying behavior. And we, frankly speaking, lost our confidence in Russia back in 2014.

36. Ukraine, on its part, as always remains open-minded and responsible, and would be ready to receive a transparency visit of international independent experts to its public health laboratories after Russia ceases a full-scale war of aggression it has unleashed against our state.

Mr. Chairperson,

37. Just like the BWC outlaws biological weapons, we expect that at this Formal Consultative Meeting States Parties would outlaw false and manipulative narratives of one State Party, which seeks to undermine the authority and credibility of this important disarmament treaty, as well as would make it impossible to be repeated in some way or another.

38. To conclude, we reiterate our call upon the international community to increase its pressure on Russia to make it stop immediately its full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine and return to the tenets of international law.

Mr. Chairperson,

39. I request that this statement be an Official Document (and Working Paper) of this Article V consultative meeting, and that it be posted by the Implementation Support Unit on the UN Geneva public website.

I thank you.
