

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

EU Statement at the Formal Consultative Meeting pursuant to Article V of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

Submitted by the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

Mr. Chair,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.
2. The Candidate Countries North Macedonia¹, Montenegro, Albania*, Republic of Moldova, the potential candidate countries Bosnia and Herzegovina* and Georgia and the EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this declaration.
3. Allow me to begin by assuring you, Ambassador Molnar, of the full support of the European Union in your role as the Chair of these Article V consultations. Particularly with your experience as the President of the Eight Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), we have full confidence in your ability to guide us through the discussions in the coming days.

Mr. Chair,

4. The EU reaffirms its unequivocal support for the BTWC as the legally binding global norm against biological weapons and cornerstone of international efforts to prevent biological agents or toxins from ever being developed, produced, stockpiled or otherwise acquired and used as weapons. Upholding this norm is of paramount importance for international peace and security.
5. We consider Article V an important mechanism within the BTWC and its operationalisation is a priority for the EU. It is essential to maintain the integrity of this mechanism and it is in this spirit that the EU and its member states will engage in this week's discussions.
6. We note that this is only the second time in the history of the Convention that a State Party has requested multilateral Article V consultations. The provisions of this Article

¹ North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.



provide an important avenue for dialogue and cooperation between States parties for solving any problems which may arise in relation to the objective, or in the application, of the BTWC.

7. We emphasise, however, that such requests for consultations should be made on a well-founded basis. Efforts to misrepresent or undermine legitimate biosafety and biosecurity research and capacity building only weaken the Convention and undermine international cooperation for peaceful purposes under Article X, including efforts to prevent, detect and control possible outbreaks of disease.

8. It is unacceptable that Russia, as part of its attempts to excuse its unjustifiable and unlawful war of aggression against Ukraine, continues to make unsubstantiated and false claims against Ukraine, the United States, and others. These false allegations and disinformation efforts regarding the alleged development and possible use of biological weapons are deeply cynical and serve only to harm international peace and security.

9. We appreciate that the United States and Ukraine have provided a specific and timely response in line with the relevant understandings of previous Review Conferences.

10. In particular, we welcome additional information on the Agreement Concerning Cooperation in the Area of Prevention of Proliferation of Technology, Pathogens, and Expertise of 2005 and that this agreement has the specific purpose to reduce and eliminate the risk of biological weapons development and proliferation. At the same time we recall that this information has been already provided through several working papers in the past, inter alia for the Meeting of States Parties in 2020. We fully acknowledge that such cooperation and assistance contributes to the fulfilment of the United States' obligations under Article X.

11. In the context of our discussions, we would like to recall similar allegations of non-compliance made by the Russian Federation in 2018 concerning the Richard Lugar Center for Public Health Research in Georgia. At the time, a voluntary visit to the laboratory attended by a number of States Parties helped to dispel concerns as clarified in the relevant BWC documents. Regrettably, Russia chose not to participate in this visit.

Mr. Chair,

12. The Russian Federation has requested Article V consultations alleging that, following its bilateral consultations with the United States and Ukraine, unanswered questions remain concerning the cooperation and assistance between the United States and Ukraine. We take note with appreciation that both countries have demonstrated to States Parties, through the detailed and credible information provided, that this cooperation and assistance has been for legitimate peaceful and, indeed, beneficial purposes in accordance with Article X of the Convention.

13. We further note that Article X not only authorizes States Parties to engage in international cooperation and assistance, but actually encourages and even obliges them to do so where they can.

14. To this end, we recall that the EU itself has a long history of supporting cooperation and assistance relevant for Article X. Currently the EU provides through a number of Council Decisions nearly 10 million EUR in support of assistance and capacity-building projects in third countries, including improving legislative and regulatory basis of biosafety and biosecurity, awareness-raising among relevant sectors as well as enhancing infectious disease surveillance, detection and control. The EU is proud of the fact that some of this EU assistance is in support of Ukraine.

15. These efforts are in addition to the EU's CBRN Centres of Excellence (CoE) Initiative for CBRN risk and threat mitigation. The EU's implementing partner for this Initiative is the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), while projects are implemented by various UN and EU Member State agencies, and by the International Science and Technology Centre in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, and the Science and Technology Centre (STCU) in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Mr Chair,

16. We are deeply concerned that disinformation efforts with regard to the BTWC are conducted to impede this type of cooperation and assistance between States Parties.

17. Biological agents and toxins are widely used for peaceful purposes in line with the BTWC provisions. At the same time, the risk of natural or accidental spread of dangerous pathogens remains. With the Covid-19 pandemic, we have witnessed how quickly diseases can spread across borders and how dangerous and disruptive they can be. This is why more than ever we need to work towards strengthening the BTWC and its implementation and enhancing dialogue and cooperation between States parties.

18. We therefore hope that these Article V consultations will be the final round of discussions related to the claims made by the Russian Federation and that the prospects of further technical cooperation and assistance for peaceful purposes under Article X will not be undermined.

19. Following these consultations, we can hopefully all move on and focus on the important task ahead of all of us: ensuring a successful Review Conference at the end of this year.

I thank you.
