

**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 of Belgium
Formal Consultative Meeting pursuant to Article
V of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin
Weapons Convention**

Submitted by Belgium

Thank you Mr. Chair,

1. Mr Chair, you have the full support of my country in your role as the Chair of these Article 5 consultations. Thank you for able guidance.

2. Belgium aligns itself to the statement made by the EU.

Mr. Chair,

3. To this day, the BWC remains the pillar of international biological arms control, and since its entry into force, it has undoubtedly contributed to international peace and security by prohibiting an entire class of weapons of mass destruction.

4. Belgium firmly supports the BWC as the legally binding global norm against biological weapons and the cornerstone of international efforts to prevent biological agents or toxins from being developed, produced, stockpiled or otherwise acquired and used as weapons. Most recently the COVID 19 pandemic starkly illustrated how the risk of natural or accidental spread of dangerous pathogens remains, and how dangerous this can be. This is why, more than ever, we need to work towards strengthening the BTWC and its implementation. We need to work to enhance dialogue and cooperation between States parties.

5. Belgium signed the BWC in 1972 and ratified it in 1979. Since, we have done our utmost efforts to implement, promote, and strengthen the treaty.

Mr Chair,

6. The prevalence of a treaty, which is legally binding, depends not only on the good will but also on the good faith of States Parties. For Belgium, as a State Party which is committed to the loyal implementation of the treaty, it is essential to maintain the integrity of the treaty as a whole.

7. Article V is an important part of the treaty. Even when this mechanism is not used regularly, it offers an important venue for consultations. It is in this context that we engage in this consultative meeting. The invocation of article 5 should however not happen lightly.



Requests for consultations must be made on a well-founded basis. Efforts to misrepresent legitimate biosafety and biosecurity research and capacity building, only weaken the Convention and undermine international cooperation.

8. We cannot be blind regarding the context in which these formal consultations are taking place. Russia's invocation of the article is taking place against the backdrop of its illegal aggression, against Ukraine. A war that is unjustifiable and unlawful, in which Russia has continued to make unsubstantiated and false claims. Indeed, disinformation efforts have been integral part of Russia's warfare techniques.

Mr Chair,

9. Carefully reading and listening to the details provided in the interventions and in the written response of the United States and Ukraine to the assertions, it is our conviction that this cooperation falls well under article X, and is part of a longstanding program, similar to one of which Russia itself has benefited in the past.

10. We hope therefore these consultations will be able to be concluded swiftly, And that we can move on to a successful review conference.
