

**Preparatory Committee for the  
Eight Review Conference of the  
Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention  
GENEVA, 26 April 2016**

**Contribution to the General Debate by  
Ms Rosie Keane, Deputy Director  
Disarmament and Non-Proliferation  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland**

Thank you Mr Chairman,

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

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

As we prepare for the Eighth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, it is timely to reiterate that Ireland regards the BTWC as a critical instrument in the global community's efforts to achieve a world free from **all** weapons of mass destruction, chemical, biological and nuclear.

We look forward to working together with the State's Parties, Academics and Civil Society, to ensure that the outcome of our work at the preparatory committees, and at the Review Conference in November should be a truly universal, strengthened and more effective Convention.

There can be no doubt of the urgency of our work. Developments since the last Review Conference, including the Ebola crisis, have shown us clearly that biological threats will not discriminate amongst victims in our increasingly interconnected world. Our efforts must be truly global so as to ensure effective disease monitoring, detection, control and prevention. Through Ireland's Development Cooperation programme (Irish Aid) and our Defence Forces, Ireland was active from the beginning of the Ebola crisis and we contributed over US\$ 36 million in aid and assistance to the affected countries. Ireland continues to provide this support to affected regions today.

Following the outbreak, Ireland also conducted two 'lessons learned' seminars which showed that strong, 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 implementation of our convention relates to the worrying reports that some Non-State Actor groups are seeking to acquire and use 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. The review of UN Security Council Resolution 1540, which is currently underway, should also provide impetus and synergies with our work here in BTWC on this important and urgent question.

Ireland would like to mention in this regard that last year the Irish Defence Forces, in collaboration with the ICRC, delivered training for aid workers in surviving the effects of a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear attack. We hope to continue with the delivery of similar training courses in the future.

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 of dual use and require thoughtful and careful management. It is clear that this topic is uppermost in the minds of our fellow States Parties and we thoroughly appreciate the papers submitted by the various delegations in advance of this PrepComm. We are in agreement that this issue should be a core area of focus for the upcoming Review Conference. Domestically, we have undertaken a number of initiatives, in order to foster discussion and awareness of this subject. By way of example, the Royal Irish Academy and the European Academies Science Advisory Council have jointly hosted an extremely useful briefing into the risks and benefits of Gain of Function research. This is only one example of the issues which we all need to consider, as we work on how to ensure our Convention remains relevant and enforceable.

The BTWC, which celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year, has had many successes to its credit. Nevertheless, it is clear that our Convention, having particular regard to the complexity of the subject matter which it deals with, requires strengthened mechanisms to ensure that it can continue to be fit for purpose. This includes, in our view, more support from a strengthened and reinforced ISU, augmented in its work by adequate resources, including staff numbers.

Ireland places particular value on compliance and would encourage all State Parties to submit returns as provided for under the Convention, and to make them public. In preparing for our completion of the 2015 returns, we undertook a thorough review of returns from previous years, so that we could identify areas for improvements.

Consequently we are satisfied that our returns this year reflect the outcome of that review, both as regards detail and completeness. We will be happy to share that experience in more detail as our discussions continue.

National Measures to implement the Treaty are also important. Ireland co-sponsored a paper, presented by our colleagues from the United States to this effect, at the 2014 MSP and we will continue to support all good faith efforts to increase compliance and to further strengthen and universalise the BTWC. We would like to thank the ISU for its valuable work and its unstinting support to the State Parties in meeting their commitments under the Treaty.

Mr Chair,

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 now prepare for the 2016 Review Conference, we, as States Parties, should all make every effort to contribute to ensuring its continuing relevance and effectiveness.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ENDS