



**High Representative's briefing to the Security Council on Threats to
International Peace and Security**

**Statement by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs**

Check against delivery



New York
11 March 2022

Madam President,

Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

I thank Council members for the opportunity to brief you this morning.

I am aware of reports that certain public health facilities are in areas impacted by armed conflict putting the safety of those facilities at risk.

I appeal to all parties in this conflict to ensure the safety of all such facilities in Ukraine.

I am aware of media reports regarding allegations of biological weapons programmes. The United Nations is not aware of any biological weapons programmes.

That is largely thanks to the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, which prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological and toxin weapons. The Russian Federation and Ukraine are both States Parties to the Convention. In addition, the Russian Federation is a Depositary Government under the Convention. All States Parties to the Convention have undertaken “never in any circumstances to develop, produce, stockpile or otherwise acquire or retain” biological weapons.

Biological weapons have been outlawed since the BWC entered into force in 1975. A total of 183 States have now joined the Convention and biological weapons are universally seen as being abhorrent and illegitimate.

The BWC lacks a multilateral verification mechanism overseen by an independent organization such as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Therefore, assessing compliance with its obligations is a task for its States Parties.

Madam President,

Despite the lack of an international verification regime, the Biological Weapons Convention does however contain several measures to which concerned States Parties can have recourse

in order to address situations in which States Parties have concerns or suspicions about the activities of their peers.

For example, Article V of the Convention states that "The States Parties to this Convention undertake to consult one another and to co-operate in solving any problems which may arise in relation to the objective of, or in the application of the provisions of, the Convention."

Within the framework of Article V, States Parties have established an annual exchange of information based upon the submission of "confidence-building measures". States Parties must declare information about relevant facilities and activities on their territory in order to "prevent or reduce the occurrence of ambiguities, doubts and suspicions" between them.

The Russian Federation and Ukraine both participate annually in the "confidence-building measures". The annual reports submitted by the Russian Federation and Ukraine are available to all BWC States Parties for the purposes of transparency and re-assurance.

In addition, and also within the framework of Article V of the Convention, States Parties have developed procedures for "clarifying ambiguous and unresolved matters", including the possible convening of a "formal consultative meeting" to consider such matters.

Article VI of the Convention states that "Any State Party to this Convention which finds that any other State Party is acting in breach of obligations deriving from the provisions of the Convention may lodge a complaint with the Security Council". If agreed by the Security Council, an investigation on the basis of the complaint received could be initiated. Article VI of the Convention has never been activated.

While these provisions have not been regularly used, they are nonetheless internationally agreed procedures that are available to be used to defuse tensions and to address and resolve any concerns relating to compliance with obligations under the BWC in a multilateral setting. I would therefore encourage BWC States Parties to consider making use of the available procedures for consultation and cooperation in order to resolve these issues.

Madam President,

Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

Situations such as this demonstrate the need to strengthen the BWC, to operationalize it and to institutionalize it. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to encourage its States Parties to come to the Convention's Ninth Review Conference, scheduled to take place in Geneva later in 2022, committed to a serious overhaul of the Convention to ensure it is properly equipped and resourced to deal with the challenges ahead.

Madam President,

Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

To conclude my statement, I would like to take this opportunity to address the worrying issue of the safety and security of nuclear power plants in Ukraine. An accident involving the nuclear facilities in Ukraine could have severe consequences for public health and the environment and all steps must be taken to avoid it. The possibility of an accident caused by failure to a reactor's power supply or the inability to provide regular maintenance is growing by the day.

The forces in effective control of nuclear power plants in Ukraine must ensure their safe and secure operation. I am extremely concerned that four of the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) seven pillars for the safe and secure operation of facilities are reportedly not being implemented at Chernobyl and Zaporizhzhya. Communications must be fully restored, and operating staff must be allowed to properly carry out their duties and to do so free of undue pressure.

I would like to echo the Secretary-General's support for IAEA Director-General Grossi's efforts to develop a framework to ensure the safety and security of Ukraine's facilities and welcome the constructive meetings he held in Turkey on 10 March with the foreign ministers of Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

I thank you very much for your attention.