

Opening remarks

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Second Annual Global Forum on Scientific Advances Important to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

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Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you Gigi. I would first like to thank you and your team at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security for organizing this second annual event and for agreeing to have our Office as a co-organizer. I'm sure that the discussions today are going to make a significant contribution to the deliberations at the Meeting of States Parties this week.

As many of you know my Office here in Geneva hosts the Implementation Support Unit of the Biological Weapons Convention. We are therefore very involved in supporting the implementation of the Convention and the conduct of its meetings here in Geneva.

As you will hear later from Daniel Feakes, the head of the Implementation Support Unit, we have been conducting a range of activities in recent years focusing on the implications of advances in science and technology for the Convention.

One set of activities will be described in more detail at a side event from 09:00 this Thursday which I encourage you all to attend. This activity consisted of a series of five regional S&T workshops and experts involved in hosting each of the workshops will describe the outcomes of the workshops at the side event.

Another initiative has been aimed at fostering biosecurity networks of young scientists in the Global South. We had a first workshop under this project here in August, and we will organize a second such workshop next year. This year, 20 young scientists from developing countries came here to Geneva to attend the Meeting of Experts on science and technology and then spend two days discussing S&T issues. They have since established a vibrant and active online community from which I am hopeful other initiatives will develop.

Both of the activities I mentioned here were funded by the European Union and were supported by experts from the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. This demonstrates the vital role of partnerships between the United Nations and scientific communities when discussing issues at the intersection of science and policymaking and diplomacy.

It is for this reason that we were very keen to be involved in the organization of this event. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, himself an engineer by training, has frequently stressed the importance of dialogue between science and diplomacy, particularly with regard to emerging technologies. His Disarmament Agenda, which he launched here in Geneva last year, and which our

Office is actively implementing, contains specific action items on promoting dialogue on these issues, and bringing scientific expertise more actively into disarmament discussions. Our involvement in this event today, should therefore be seen in the context of the Secretary-General's overall agenda to incorporate scientific expertise into international policy-making.

As we look at the programme for today's discussions, and the agenda for the Meeting of States Parties itself, I would like to refer to three areas in which I think that science and technology can make a vital contribution to the BWC – these are preparedness, safeguarding the peaceful uses of biology and building capacities to review and assess relevant scientific advances.

We will hear more about these three topics during this week and I am glad to see all three of them reflected in the programme for today's discussions. They are of importance to the current geostrategic landscape and will only grow in importance as we look forwards.

Next year marks the 45th anniversary of the BWC and the following year will see the Convention's Ninth Review Conference. Next year also marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. These events will hopefully encourage us all to frame our discussions not only in a historical context but also in one firmly looking to the future.

I wish you all the best for the discussions today and would like to once again thank Gigi and the Johns Hopkins team for bringing this fabulous event to UN Geneva.

Thank you.