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ENGLISH SUMMARY

- Emphasized the important role of parliamentarians, in their capacity as legislators, both in the national sphere as well as in their responsibility in addressing international issues regarding disarmament, no proliferation and reduction of armed violence.
- Biological and toxin weapons are among the most lethal and ruthless weapons known to mankind and their impact reaches far beyond the local context or the individual victims that were immediately targeted; it undermines the health, safety, and security of all nations it touches.
- Partly based on the Geneva Protocol of 1925, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and their Destruction was opened for signature on April 10, 1972, becoming the first multilateral disarmament treaty banning the development, production and stockpiling of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. The Convention came into force on March 26, 1975, but the absence of a formal verification regime to monitor compliance has limited its effectiveness. In 2004, the UN Security Council underscored in its Resolution 1540 the importance of such multilateral disarmament treaties and the pressing need for full implementation of these treaties in order to safeguard international stability.

Several reasons why the Convention, despite significant progress, has not yet been implemented to its full potential:

- There is a widespread tendency to consider protection against biological weapons unnecessary, the responsibility of others, or a task simply too difficult. However, the threat of a biological attack has not diminished with the end of the Cold War or the unilateral dismantlement of certain countries.
- Biological weapons are characterized by their low visibility, high impact, considerable access, and relatively unsophisticated means of delivery. The small amounts of source material facilitate the concealment, transportation and dissemination of biological agents and toxins. Many of these source materials occur naturally in the environment and are therefore easily accessible. In addition, many are used for wholly legitimate (medical) purposes which makes the technology to develop and enhance these kind of agents readily available to a significant part of both the military and civilian sector. Unlike nuclear weapons, biological and toxin weapons do not require the use of missile launchers or other advanced weapon systems. Small groups of people with limited financial resources and basic training in biology and engineering could develop biological weapons.

Why hasn't this issue received more priority, given the potential impact of these weapons and the relative ease with which they can be obtained?

- Defense against biological attacks is difficult and unknown terrain. There is a tendency to relate these issues to the wayside in favor of more pressing and easier to handle problems.
- Belief that biological weapons have never been used and therefore never will be.
- Blind faith in nuclear deterrence: conviction that a regime can be dissuaded from using biological weapons if threatened with retaliation with nuclear weapons.

These thought patterns are, in a way, dangerously inadequate.

- Biological warfare is uncharted territory for many political actors, but no national or international security establishment should let unfamiliarity foster ignorance or indifference. Biological weapons inevitably transform out traditional conceptions of national security and the nature of armed conflict. Wars will not always be fought on conventional battlefields. Biological weapons are not respectful of geographical boundaries or other conceptual or bureaucratic divisions. But right there is where lies our challenge, our opportunity and our call to action.
- We live in a changing world. New, non-state actors have entered the stage, expressing their political will through heinous acts of terrorism. Just as much as biological warfare does not respect national borders, neither does organized crime or terrorism. We should not underestimate the power and reach of such groups, as history has shown us, and their ability to organize themselves in complex transnational networks, in the context of an increasingly globalized world.
  - While Latin America has always experienced a certain level of violence by criminal organizations, recent years have marked an escalation in the level of violence and brutality used by these organizations. An important cause for this has been the incorporation of highly trained police and military personnel (retired or in active duty) in the executive branch of these criminal organizations, resulting in the introduction of military-style tactics and the acquisition of more sophisticated weapons.
- The proliferation and fragmentation of non-state armed groups deserves special attention because they often deliberately target civil populations in order to achieve their political and military goals. Biological weapons do not have the accuracy and precision that characterize other types of modern weaponry; once they have been released into the environment they are almost impossible to control. Collateral damages cannot be predicted beforehand and may include food shortages, economic losses, environmental disasters, widespread disease, and generalized chaos and distrust among the public. The Ebola outbreak in Africa has reminded us of the importance of making progress on multilateral, multidisciplinary and multisectoral cooperation to manage these risks.
- The Middle East and Asia have historically been the places that have suffered mostly from the use of weapons of mass destruction, for their use via state actors. Today these regions are again under the same threat, but this time through the action of terrorist groups.
- The means of delivery and dissemination of biological and toxin weapons can take a variety of forms, making it very difficult to trace and verify the origin of an outbreak. In

this respect, we need to build and increase capacities in all sectors to monitor diseases and detect their origin, providing States with the means to respond to these possible catastrophes. Within the framework of the BWC, better coordination ensures that resources are used optimally for the benefit of many.

Challenges we have ahead of us:

1. Universality.

Proper preparation and a coordinated response are important, but prevention is always better, therefore, universal adherence to the Convention remains a priority. The effects of biological warfare will most likely not be limited only to the designated target, which means that what is at stake involves all States, even those that are currently not involved in armed conflict or under the direct threat of an attack. There are 9 signatory states that have not yet ratified the Convention and another 14 States remain without signing the Convention. It is imperative to analyze the profile of each of these states and take into account the specific issues that have impaired these States to reach full membership.

2. Implementation.

Legislation should provide for the establishment of internal mechanisms, in particular with regard to: customs control and mechanisms of foreign trade; prevention; the participation of the judiciary and the formal training of judges and prosecutors to enable them to recognize violations of the regulations and treat them as such in their prosecution and punishment, coordination with other foreign ministries to facilitate effective international cooperation, awareness and dissemination of knowledge on these topics among all national and state actors involved, however minimal their involvement may be; the development of biosafety and biosecurity programs; partnerships between the public and private sector; the inclusion of this subject in the curriculum of all university courses related to the topic; and ensuring adequate funding for these activities as to safeguard national and international security at all times; among others.

3. Conducting research and disseminating knowledge, within the realm of biological sciences and chemistry, for peaceful purposes and in a constructive manner, to aid the development of all nations and humanity. It should be noted that these non-proliferation and disarmament regimes do not prohibit or limit the development of the technologies to which they apply, they offer a harmonized framework for ethical conduct with regard to a number of listed materials and agents, considering the risk they pose to the proliferation of non-conventional arms.

4. Non-proliferation.

With regard to the control and oversight of sensitive exports and war materiel there are two main concepts: disarmament and non-proliferation. While the first is aimed at

the elimination or prohibition of an entire category of weapons, non-proliferation regimes are based upon informal agreements through which a number of countries that share a common view on the matter seek to coordinate their export licensing policies of these technologies and exchange intelligence with regard to any attempts made by actors that can be identified as “a source of concern” to purchase these high-risk materials, thus preventing materials and equipment needed to produce weapons of mass destruction to fall into the wrong hands. Argentina is an active participant in cooperation and training activities in these matters. I want to emphasize that as a counterpart to its function as controlling mechanism, non-proliferation must ensure at the same time:

- A. Normal access to science and the economical and other benefits it provides, within the framework of international commitments and ensuring its use toward peaceful means in conformity with the UN Charter.
- B. The sovereign right of States to carry out the necessary development of dual-use technologies, even when applied to defense systems, as long as international commitments and the principles of the UN Charter are respected.

5. Cooperation.

We have a shared responsibility in monitoring these activities and the exchange of relevant information and experiences. We share a common goal - the protection of our national territories and populations against a possible tragedy - and therefore we also need a common strategy and mentality, which translates itself to our aspiration for universal adherence to the Convention and the establishment of the necessary legal mechanisms to protect the integrity of the Convention and verify compliance with its provisions. When we become more aware of our common goals and values, mutual trust between states will build, which is key to a safer and more peaceful world.

Important achievements/developments:

- Second Review Conference (1986): implementations of Confidence-Building Measures (CBM) in order to prevent the occurrence of ambiguities, doubts and suspicions and in order to improve international cooperation in the field of peaceful biological activities.
- Third Review Conference (1991): in the context of the CBMs, State Parties undertook to provide annual reports on specific activities related to the BWC.
- Special Review Conference (1994): an Ad Hoc Working Group was established to negotiate and draft a legally binding verification protocol. Unfortunately, State Parties failed to reach an agreement on this legal instrument.
- Sixth Review Conference (2006): establishment of the Implementation Support Unit, which provides specialized assistance to State Parties in implementing the Convention, and which is led by Mr. Daniel Feakes, whom we have the honor of receiving here as a panelist.

- With respect to cooperation, I would like to refer to Article X of the Convention which proclaims that “the States Parties to this Convention undertake to facilitate, and have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the use of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins for peaceful purposes.” During the Seventh Review Conference Article X was discussed in greater detail and in order to improve its implementation, the Conference called upon all States Parties to: continue strengthening existing international organizations and networks working on infectious diseases, including the WHO, FAO, OIE and IPPC; build and improve national and regional capacities to investigate detect and combat infectious diseases as well as the management of other possible biological threats through the adoption of national and regional plans of action; promote the transfer of technology for peaceful purposes, including the development and production of vaccines and drugs for the treatment of infectious diseases; and continue to support capacity building in State Parties in need of assistance in the relevant fields.
- Many of these provisions are reiterated in the Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs). Since we are in a meeting of parliamentarians, I would like to put special emphasis on one of these provisions, which is point ‘E’. This provision requires States Parties to annually submit a declaration on legislation, regulations and other measures in view of the full implementation of the Convention, with regard to the States Parties obligation to translate its commitments to the Convention into effective national measures.
- Within this context I would also like to refer to Article IV of the Convention, which requires that “each State Party to this Convention shall, in accordance with its constitutional processes, take any necessary measures to prohibit and prevent the development, production, stockpiling, acquisition, or retention of the agents, toxins, weapons, equipment and means of delivery specified in article I of the Convention, within the territory of such State, under its jurisdiction or under its control anywhere.” The legislative measures required depend, of course, on the particular circumstances and legal system of each State Party, and as such there may be different approaches to the implementation of the Convention at the national level.
- The problems we face can only be addressed in a joint effort among all the members of the international community, and therefore the universality, implementation, and international and regional cooperation are of the utmost importance, and, also, the reason why we are here together on this day. To reduce the gap between the scientific, military and political sectors we need to adopt a multifaceted and multidisciplinary approach. The time to act is now, as we face the rapid evolution and development of these kind of unconventional weapons.

- The State Parties to the Convention must take responsibility for implementing the objectives they have set and to which they have committed themselves. But I do not want to end without noting that it should also promote the implementation of these standards, not only to State members, but to all groups and networks, if indeed we indeed are to tackle these risks effectively.
- Based upon the subjects I have briefly touched, the question is: What can State Parties do to make sure the objectives of the Convention are met, apart from insisting on and creating the conditions for those who have not ratified (Syria) or signed (Israel) to comply with their obligations to the international community? And what is our role as parliamentarians in promoting the universality of the Convention, which also includes promoting the responsible use of these materials among non-state actors and preventing their use for illegal or unethical purposes.
- We are an organization of parliamentarians in action, we cannot rely merely on wishful statements. It is time to present proposals of our own to extend the application of Articles V and VI of the Convention to non-state actors, as expressed in the resolutions of the UN Security Council. The Council already has a Counter-Terrorism Commission (which has not been very effective yet since it still hasn't determined the exact scope of the word) and which should be analyzing this specific case and, at the same time, include the proposed mechanisms for monitoring and verification, in regard to which PGA should be invited to present its findings and participate in its capacity of civil society organization.

Finally, each of us plays an important role in their national and regional parliaments, and that is where we should take these proposals to be discussed and adopted by governments on a global level. International peace and security must be part of our daily work in order to establish a more stable and secure world.