



77th Session of the UNGA - First Committee
Thematic Debate Cluster 02
Other Weapons of Mass Destruction
Statement by Mr. Sugeeshwara Gunaratna,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka
October 2022

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. I wish to make the followings points in my national capacity.

Mr. Chairman,

At a time when the world is grappling with several global crises and witnessing an alarming deterioration of the international security environment, the need to curb all weapons of mass destruction assumes paramount importance. The precarious nature of the international security environment today is such that a misperception or mistake can endanger our very existence.

Sri Lanka became a state party to the Biological Weapons Convention in 1972 and the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1993. We attach great importance to these two instruments in our collective quest to delegitimize all weapons of mass destruction-chemical, biological and nuclear.

We note with satisfaction the effective operation of the CWC as the only comprehensive multilateral treaty banning an entire category of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) along with

a verification system as well as promoting the use of chemicals for peaceful purposes. It must be reiterated that any use of chemical weapons is a complete disregard of humanity, reprehensible and devoid of any legal or moral basis. Sri Lanka has accordingly implemented a system to give effect to the convention, nationally. Among other measures, the scheduled chemical industries are identified and registered under our National Authority, which comes under the Ministry of Defence, and import recommendations and permits are issued to the scheduled chemical users. We are currently in the process of increasing efficiencies associated with this process through development of an online software and the establishment of a dedicated analytical laboratory for the National Authority.

We underline the need to achieve full universality of the CWC and to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons and its access by non-state actors. Any allegation regarding the use of chemical weapons must be dealt with strictly as per the provisions and procedures laid down in the conventions and consent must be addressed through consultation and cooperation among all parties concerned.

Mr. Chairman,

The Biological Weapons Convention is a vital component in the legal architecture to combat weapons of mass destruction. However, the lack of a verification system continues to pose challenges to its effective implementation. Sri Lanka shares the position of the NAM on the need to strengthen the full implementation of the convention including through negotiation and conclusion of a legally binding protocol, setting out modalities to ensure implementation of all articles of the convention in a balanced and comprehensive manner. The need to enhance international cooperation for peaceful purposes should be underlined.

Mr. Chairman, in a nutshell, what is sought is a harmonized international regime that ensures biosafety and biosecurity. The terms biosafety and biosecurity has today come to encompass not only 'laboratory bio-security' but biosecurity which addresses deliberate threats from terrorism as well as naturally occurring biological threats. The thinking appears to be that bio security is not limited to protecting laboratory based pathogens and toxins from theft as dangerous pathogens are not only located in laboratories but can also be found readily in nature. Bioterrorism and the

spread of high containment biological laboratories around the world with pathogenic agents of concern are located primarily within the laboratories and the improvement of security in the laboratories must be of paramount importance. We have witnessed and experienced the catastrophe of a pandemic and we cannot afford to have another.

Mr. Chairman, it is therefore necessary to develop more globally coherent biosafety and biosecurity standards and overcome the yawning gaps in the regulatory framework and curtail the risk of accidental release of dangerous pathogens but also prevent room for the international misuse of biotechnology. We believe that confidence building measures among states will facilitate greater exchange of information within the research community while also creating trust among the different stakeholders for a verifiable common standard against biological weapons.

Finally, Mr. Chairman,

With regard to UN Security Council Resolution 1540, we take note of the open consultations of the 1540 Committee on the Comprehensive Review of the status of the Resolution 1540 held in May - June this year. While we note the expiry of the Committee's mandate in November 2022, we underscore that any review should be in conformity with the UN Charter, relevant legally binding instruments and should not be diluted from the main focus of preventing the acquisition of WMDs by non-state actors. The Government of Sri Lanka has steadfastly and consistently supported global initiatives to prevent the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction. As a country that has experienced and suffered from three decades of ruthless terrorism, and as a nation that has successfully eliminated terrorism from its soil, Sri Lanka fully understands the danger of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of non-State actors. Sri Lanka continues to take measures, with the participation of all stakeholders concerned, to implement the resolution and is a State party to 12 international conventions aimed at preventing the spread of terrorism.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.