



## **Video Message**

By

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**Biological Weapons Convention: 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event**

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It is my pleasure to send this message to you, the States party to the Biological Weapons Convention on this historic occasion – the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that ground-breaking treaty.

It is widely known that the BWC was the first international treaty to effectively prohibit an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. Yet the BWC's other major achievement is equally important – the creation of an ironclad norm against the possession and use of biological weapons, and the abhorrence associated with the very idea of using disease as a weapon.

How many States today boast that they are “biological weapon States”? Who argues now that the bubonic plague and smallpox are legitimate weapons to use under any circumstances? Who speaks of a bioweapon umbrella?

This norm is a testament to the importance of the BWC and the role its States parties and, more recently, the BWC Implementation Support Unit have played in strengthening both the treaty and norm over the course of the last four decades.

Of course, it is a norm that requires constant cultivation and would be made even more robust through universal membership and implementation of the treaty. After 40 years, there can be no justification for any State remaining outside the Convention.

In today's increasingly complex geopolitical environment, the challenges posed by biological threats are not dissipating. If anything, they are becoming more complex. Remarkable biotechnological breakthroughs are occurring in parallel with proliferation concerns, such as the interest in biological weapons shown by some terrorist or insurgent groups.

The human consequences of the outbreak of any one of today's deadly and highly contagious diseases highlight the devastation diseases can wreak. The nightmare scenario in which such a disease is deliberately released as a weapon must be avoided at all costs.

These emerging challenges and opportunities highlight the importance of the BWC in the 21st Century. The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, as well as next year's Review Conference, provides a valuable opportunity for you, the States parties, to ensure the BWC remains the effective bulwark against the spread or use of biological weapons it has been since it entered into force in 1975.