

NL closing statement BTWC 8th Review Conference

By Sachi Claringbould, First Secretary, Permanent Representation at the Conference on Disarmament

- Following on comments by the distinguished delegate of the EU, it would like to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

- Mr. President, thank you for your tremendous efforts. It was indeed a very difficult task. Thank you also to the ambassadors of Germany and Algeria for their hard work on the Committee of the Whole and the Solemn Declaration, and of course, the facilitators for their creativity and inclusiveness, and Daniel Feakes and his super team for their professionalism.

- Thank you also to our fellow delegates, our friends from the scientific community and NGOs for their tireless efforts in the past weeks - or even the past years leading up to this Review Conference.

- We all worked very hard, because we realise the importance of the BTWC. Especially in today's environment where biosecurity risks are greater because of the rapid scientific and technological advancements and the increasing role of non-state actors on the international plane. And also because we know success in the BTWC would have positively reverberated across the Disarmament machinery.

- The Netherlands therefore all the more regrets today's outcome and is disappointed that we did not manage to agree on the constructive proposals put forward.

- A lot was at stake. We tried to engage in a constructive manner to achieve progress on:

- a better Intersessional Programme,

- that developments in Science & Technology would be better embedded in the Convention, through for example a S&T Committee

- that implementation would have further strengthened, by confidence building measures, legislation tools, international cooperation

- that we would have improved the working of article VII

- that we would have substantially strengthened the ISU by automatically renewing their mandate, by increasing their number of staff so that they can actually do the tasks we have assigned them, and not least to make sure that provisions are made to cover for the temporary absence of staff (a relatively simple fix to an issue overlooked in the past).

- If you look at what we were all working on, a few times in a very constructive manner with engagement of a large majority of countries, it is all the more disappointing what the result brought us. It is not commensurate with the efforts and the wish of many of us here.

- The Netherlands believes we should have dealt with it better. We wished more space was created for those moments where we really engaged and had back and forth substantive discussions instead of following lines we have been following for a long time. We all bear a responsibility there.

- Let me say that there is one consolation: the ideas and suggestions floated and worked on to achieve progress for the Convention, may not be in our final report today, but they are out there and some of those may need a bit more maturing or circumstances beyond us might need to change. So one day, we may be able to return to them.

- Let me conclude, Mr President, by thanking all involved again, and maybe slightly naively hoping that in a five years time we have learned from this lesson and have found a way to get the BTWC back on track. My fear is that only a serious attack/incident with a biological weapon will change the momentum. I plead to all to not wait until this happens and take responsibility together rather sooner than later to move the BTWC forward.