Mr. Chairman,

The Republic of Korea attaches great importance to the BWC and the CWC as core pillars of the global disarmament and nonproliferation regime. These two conventions have continued to underpin our collective efforts to put in practice outlawing biological and chemical weapons and associated substances.

First, our efforts on chemical weapons. The 26th of last April marked the 20th Anniversary of the entry into force of the CWC and the founding of the OPCW. Over the past two decades, about 95% of all chemical weapons declared by State Parties have been destroyed, a remarkable achievement indeed. With Russia and the United States scheduled to complete the destruction of their remaining stockpiles by the end of 2020 and 2023 respectively, we now stand closer to the complete elimination of chemical weapons.

In spite of our efforts, however, we are facing formidable tasks ahead. The use of chemical weapons in Syria is an issue of utmost gravity and has to be addressed with urgency. Two reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission confirmed the use of mustard agent in September 2016 in Um-Housh and that of sarin or sarin-like substance
this April in Khan Shaykhun. The Republic of Korea strongly condemns these heinous crimes and urges the OPCW-UN JIM to make a thorough investigation so that those behind any use of chemical weapons are brought to justice.

The use of chemical weapons by non-state actors is another urgent challenge. The third and fourth JIM reports in 2016 confirmed the use of toxic chemicals as weapons by ISIS. We would like to emphasize that the prevention of the acquisition and use of chemical weapons by non-state actors should be a top priority for the OPCW and look forward to the OPCW’s early adoption of the draft Decision on Addressing the Threat posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors, which we are co-sponsoring.

We are also keenly aware of the fact that despite the CWC being one of the most universal disarmament treaties, North Korea and three countries still remain outside the Convention. We will continue to support efforts for the full universalization of the CWC, as well as the success of the Fourth Review Conference in 2018.

Mr. Chairman,

Likewise, the Republic of Korea has been consistent in its support for reinforcing the BWC regime, based on each State Party’s robust implementation of the obligations under the Convention. We strongly believe that strong confidence building measures, sufficient capacity-building and assistance, as well as adequate consideration on the impact of relevant technological developments are essential aspects.

First, the Republic of Korea is engaging in effective actions such as submitting CBM reports, enacting domestic legislations, and building operational capabilities.

Second, we are committed to international cooperation and assistance efforts for capacity-building, from the construction of medical facilities to the provision of technical assistance and medical staff training in cooperation with the Korea International Cooperation Agency. The Republic of Korea is
also actively participating in various multilateral capacity-building programs, including the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) and the Global Partnership (GP).

Third, in light of the rapid development of science and technology, combined with their wide availability and inherent dual-use nature, the international regime against biological weapons needs to adapt itself to meet the emerging challenges in a pragmatic and realistic way. We share the view that the establishment of a more structured and sustainable Science and Technology review process is needed to introduce a more current and thus relevant technical foundation to the Convention.

It was regrettable that we were not able to adopt by consensus the final document of the 8th Review Conference last year, which would have contributed to further strengthening these essential aspects of the BWC. Given the importance of the Convention itself and its impact on multilateral disarmament efforts, we must achieve substantial outcomes at the upcoming Meeting of the State Parties in December. We reaffirm an unwavering commitment to the BWC and to the success of the 2017 Meeting of the State Parties.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. /END/