

**Statement on Biological Weapons  
UN General Assembly First Committee  
New York  
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Mr Chair, distinguished representatives,

The Biological Weapons Convention is in a precarious situation.

This is first and foremost down to resourcing. Not only is the treaty's Implementation Support Unit under-staffed, it is also run on an inadequate budget. A more pressing concern, however, is that there are not enough funds to pay staff for annual contracts, nor to organise the mandated Meeting of States Parties in December.

The reason for this is simple. Some states are not honouring their financial commitments. The most recent status of contributions provided by UNOG's Financial Resources Management Services shows there are 84 states in arrears. Yet, a handful of states owe a disproportionately large amount. It is only five states who account for more than three quarters of the overall debt.

Chronic under-payment has for some time been off-set by generous over-payments from other states. Non-payment, however, is unsustainable, and it is a sorry state of affairs. Not only because such a high proportion of states do not appear to take their commitments to the treaty seriously, but because such irresponsible behaviour jeopardises the efforts by states who do take their commitments seriously.

The non-payments are particularly hard to swallow because it concerns such a relatively small amount of money. Underpayments in 2018 amount to just over \$130,000. In 2017, it was just under \$50,000.

Let the message be clear: it is high time for debtors to pay up, to put their money where their mouths are, and to stop risking the future operation of the biological disarmament regime. All states should pay their assessed contributions in full and on time.

Upholding the norm against biological weapons is more important than ever. Rapid advances in science and technology could potentially enable more capable and more accessible biological weapons. These developments are taking place against a backdrop of increased global militarization, a more complex world order, and a weakening of the international taboo against other unconventional weapons.

Mr Chair,

The First Committee deliberations over the coming weeks must address sustained financial commitment to the Biological Weapons Convention. Your deliberations must also consider possible future structures for institutional strengthening of the treaty. These must take account of the full range of approaches and options, and be geared to the practicalities of making the Biological Weapons Convention work more effectively, and with enhanced transparency, so as to provide greater levels of reassurance that the biological disarmament regime is robust and secure.