



PRESS RELEASE

THE AFRICAN UNION CALLS FOR THE UNIVERSALIZATION AND FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

Addis Ababa, 26 March 2015: Today marks the 40th anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction. The Convention imposes a total ban on the development, production and stockpiling of biological weapons, and calls for the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the use of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins for peaceful purposes.

The Chairperson of the Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, emphasizes the contribution of the Convention's national implementation measures to strengthening public health, particularly those relating to training and capacity building, improving bio-safety and bio-security, and enhancing capacities for surveillance and detection of disease outbreaks. She stresses that these measures will contribute to the improvement of the response to disease outbreaks.

In this regard, the Chairperson of the Commission stresses the importance of enhancing international cooperation, assistance and exchange in biological sciences and technology for peaceful purposes, calling on Member States and international partners to promote capacity building in the fields of training and education, disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis, and containment of communicable diseases. Referring to the recent Ebola virus disease outbreak, she stresses the critical need for such effective cooperation under the Convention, emphasizing that in an increasingly interconnected world, such outbreaks poses a threat not only to health but also to regional economy and security.

The Chairperson of the Commission seizes this opportunity to call on Member States that have not yet done so to ratify and accede to the Convention without further delay. She further calls on all Member States to implement the necessary national measures in compliance with its provisions. She stresses the importance of such measures for the strengthening of the effectiveness and authority of the Convention, as well as for the transparency, confidence-building measures and non-proliferation assurances they are meant to provide.

The Chairperson of the Commission reiterates the Commission's continued commitment, within the framework of the Common African Defence and Security Policy adopted by the 2nd Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held in Sirte, Libya, on 28 February 2004, to support Member States in effectively implementing their obligations pursuant to the Convention and in fully taking advantage of the benefits of the peaceful applications of life sciences and biotechnology.