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PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA  
TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION  
ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE DEVELOPMENT,  
PRODUCTION AND STOCKPILING OF BACTERIOLOGICAL  
(BIOLOGICAL AND TOXIN WEAPONS AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION (BTWC):

GENEVA, 10 DECEMBER 2007

STATEMENT

BY

Jayant Prasad  
Ambassador & Permanent Representative of India  
to the Conference on Disarmament



Mr President

My delegation is happy to see you chairing the Annual Meeting of the States Parties of Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). We would like to thank you for your leadership and for imparting a sense of forward movement that we feel in the context of the Convention since the Review Conference held last year.

We congratulate you on your efforts to enlarge our membership and would like to welcome the delegations of Gabon, Kazakhstan, Montenegro and Trinidad and Tobago to the Convention's fraternity. We join the call to the signatory States to the Convention that have not yet ratified it, to do so, and to the other States who have not signed the Convention, to become party to it at the earliest.

We appreciate greatly the efforts of the Implementation Support Unit and the services it has rendered to State Parties in the short period since its establishment, especially the speed with which it set up the restricted area website and the facilities for electronic submission and publication of CBMs.

While we have embarked upon a new inter-sessional work programme, we must remind ourselves of the need to strengthen the Convention to deal with the widening threat spectrum arising from possible malevolent uses of biotechnology, which is creating new ways of manipulating basic life processes. The dramatic progress in the field of synthetic biology has increased the possibility of engineering living organisms. Moreover, DNA synthesis and genomic technologies utilise equipment and materials that are readily available and relatively inexpensive and much of the relevant information is accessible on e-databases. Adding to the spectre of new and deadlier microorganisms and toxins is the growing possibility that non-State actors could acquire and use biological warfare agents as new instruments of terror.

We associate ourselves with the statement of the Non-Aligned Movement delivered by Cuba earlier today, particularly its emphasis on strengthening the Convention through multilateral negotiations for a non-discriminatory, legally binding agreement, including on verification, dealing with all the articles of the Convention in a balanced and comprehensive manner. In the face of the emerging challenges, verification of compliance will be an important element in providing the assurance that all States Parties are meeting their commitments and obligations.

The Meeting of Experts held last August has provided useful inputs on the issues that are to be discussed in our meeting. As outlined in the 'synthesis' document, a host of issues are to be addressed in order to enhance national implementation and increase regional cooperation to implement fully the obligations under the Convention. Since the intrinsic capacity for the development of advanced biological warfare agents could expand at the same pace as the pace of civilian research, States Parties require to exercise utmost vigilance in strictly complying with the provisions of the Convention. Continued effort towards identifying likely sources of danger and formulating and implementing national measures to avert them would be vital for fulfilling the obligations of the States Parties under the Convention.

Biological agents and toxins do not respect national frontiers: indeed, recent events have underlined again that diseases spread rapidly across continents. Regional and sub-regional cooperation, therefore, are essential for enhanced security as much as for increasing the knowledge base within regions for combating the dangers that may arise both from naturally occurring and deliberately induced outbreak of disease. We need to strengthen national and regional capacities in the public health infrastructure, as also the existing level of preparedness for the prevention, response and recovery capabilities against biological attacks.

Unfortunately, a majority of States Parties lack resources for enhancing national implementation and forging greater regional cooperation. The development of national, regional and international capabilities for surveillance, detection, diagnosis and combating of infectious diseases will require a substantial investment, as also a much greater level of commitment to increased international assistance and cooperation as provided for in Article X of the Convention. Some international organizations such as the World Health Organization, the Food and Agricultural Organization, and the World Organization for Animal Health are already helping in combating human, animal and plant diseases, and we commend them for their efforts. A substantial effort is also required by States Parties themselves, from within the framework of this Convention.

Mr. President

The BWC is at a crucial juncture. Our recent efforts have nurtured interest in the Convention. In order to strengthen it, however, much more needs to be done. My delegation remains committed to assisting you in this task.