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**PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA  
TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT**

**BWC : Meeting of Experts**

**GENEVA, 18 August 2008**

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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Ambassador & Permanent Representative of India  
to the Conference on Disarmament**



Mr Chairman,

We would like to join other delegations in conveying to you our warm congratulations on your assumption of the Chairmanship of the BWC's deliberations this year. We would also like to convey our appreciation to you and to the Implementation Support Unit for facilitating consultations and laying the ground work for this meeting. I would like to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation for the success of our common endeavours. India fully associates itself with the Statement made by Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr Chairman,

India attaches the highest priority towards the further strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention and its full implementation. Along with the CWC, the Biological Weapons Convention eliminated an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. As mandated by the 6<sup>th</sup> Review Conference, we are now undertaking inter-sessional work with the participation of experts to facilitate our deliberations. While these deliberations are useful, only a multilaterally agreed mechanism for verification of compliance can provide the assurance of observance of the legal obligations by the States Parties and can act as deterrence against non-compliance. We also believe that decisions regarding strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention should be taken by the Review Conferences based on the principle of consensus.

Mr Chairman,

Recent advances in biotechnology, genetic engineering and life sciences, and their dual use nature pose particular dangers of proliferation and the hostile use of biological agents. The possibility that non-state actors, including terrorists could acquire and resort to the use of biological warfare agents and toxins has added a new dimension to this danger. India, therefore, supports international cooperation efforts to address these challenges. We have undertaken initiatives at the United Nations General Assembly, including sponsoring a resolution on 'Measures to prevent terrorists from Acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction.

In May 2005, India adopted a legislation called the 'Weapons of Mass Destruction and their delivery Systems Act' which builds upon existing regulatory framework relating to prohibiting unlawful WMD activities and strengthen national exports controls. This Act covers all the prohibitions that are required under the Biological Weapons Convention. India continues to take further measures to update and strengthen controls on biological agent and toxins. It is against the above background that we welcome a discussion on bio-security, bio-safety as well as oversight education, awareness, raising and adoption and/or development of Codes of Conduct with the aim of preventing misuse in the context of advances in bio-science, technology research with the potential of use for purposes prohibited by the Convention.

Mr Chairman,

Though the concepts of bio-safety and bio-security are not defined per se by the Convention, there is merit in a discussion amongst the States Parties to see how we can meet the aims and objectives of the Convention. We are also aware that these two concepts, which are mutually related and reinforcing have also been addressed in other international fora. We believe that we should focus our deliberations on exchange of ideas and experiences to see whether best practices can be evolved, which can be implemented by national authorities which should continue to bear the main responsibility for implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention, in accordance with relevant national laws, regulations and policies. We also believe that while evolving Codes of Conduct cannot be a substitute for legally binding measures to ensure the strict implementation and compliance with the provisions of the Convention, an exchange of views to draw up best practices so as to increase awareness, especially with regard to the multi-faceted nature of dual use of material and technologies can be of benefit to all. Our discussions should be aimed at helping States Parties improve their national standards in the fields of bio-safety and bio-security and should be implemented on a national and voluntary basis. We believe that achieving such standards can be facilitated by international cooperation and strengthening the implementation of Article X of the Convention, to which India attaches the highest priority.

Mr Chairman,

In recent years, India has made considerable strides in the advancement of biological sciences, life sciences and biotechnology which are critical to meeting the developmental aspirations of our people. Indian industry is today in the forefront of global advances in bio-technology, genetic engineering and life sciences. At the same time, we are fully conscious of the heavy responsibility that rests on our shoulders as possessors of advanced technology to guard against their misuse. The Indian Government along with industry as well as the research and academic communities have undertaken measures to improve oversight education and awareness. There is a productive and expanding partnership between Government and industry to work towards this common objective. We will be happy to share our perspectives during the relevant sessions in the coming days.

Our delegation consists of experts from Capital, including from private industry. Our experts look forward to actively participate in the deliberations and to interacting with other delegations, including those from the NGO community.

Thank you Mr Chairman.