

**Statement by Ambassador Jayant Prasad, Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament at the Meeting of Experts of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BTWC), Geneva, August 20, 2007**

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by congratulating you for the dynamic leadership you have provided this Convention since its 6th Review Conference last year. This meeting of experts is a result of the decisions of the Review Conference for the success of which we owe you a great deal. Given your consummate skills, my delegation is confident that the meeting of experts will have equal success.

As we begin to take stock of the ways and means to enhance national implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, it is well worth reminding ourselves of the success of the international community in translating into action their common resolve to eliminate an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. This provided a good example for a similar effort in the area of chemical weapons, which led to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the ongoing world-wide destruction of chemical weapons facilities and stocks. We need a similar effort in the area of nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile, it is imperative that the norms against biological weapons contained in BTWC are fully upheld and implemented, especially in the context of a growing threat of proliferation of biological weapons and bio-terrorism. Advances in biotechnology, genetic engineering and life sciences hold great promise and equally great risks. The intrinsic capacity for the development of biological warfare agents will expand at the same speed as the pace of civilian research. The greater availability of expertise, the dissemination of scientific information and reduction in costs have brought the making and deploying of biological warfare agents within the capacity of terrorists.

The short and straightforward text of BTWC, containing simply stated commitments, does not elaborate the fine distinction between prohibited and permitted activities. Moreover, the prohibitions contained in the Convention, for want of provisions on verification of compliance, critically depend on the commitment of the States Parties to observe these prohibitions. That is why we have always emphasized the responsibility of States Parties to fully implement their obligations under the Convention and adopt national measures, including the enforcement of legislative and administrative measures, to ensure their compliance with all the provisions of the Convention.

We are, therefore, pleased that the very first meeting of experts for the new inter-sessional work programme is devoted to national implementation, considerable ground on which was initially covered in the course of the meetings of experts and States Parties in 2003. Our ensuing deliberations will catalyze fresh ideas and throw up best practices on how to implement the Convention more effectively. In this connection, we would like to express our appreciation for the important contribution made by some States Parties, the concerned international organisations as well as civil society organisations and think tanks in providing us with significant material on the core issues that we hope to consider in this meeting. Their active participation, including that of the national public

health stakeholders, augurs well for our deliberations. My delegation will be making presentation on both the issues selected for this meeting.

We are also pleased to note the establishment of the Implementation Support Unit. The ISU has already commenced the much needed organisational support that the Convention was so much in need of. We are confident that the ISU will assist greatly in the full and effective implementation of the Convention, including the promotion of international, regional and sub-regional cooperation and the universalisation of the Convention.

We are fortunate for the success so far in our common endeavour in banning biological weapons. This meeting of experts, and the later meeting of States Parties, we hope, will further the coherence, cooperative atmosphere and commitment that have emerged as the key characteristics of the Convention's work programme. A steady and cooperative approach will help consolidate our past achievements. My delegation, Mr. Chairman, remains committed to working with you towards this end.

I thank you.