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

**6<sup>TH</sup> REVIEW CONFERENCE 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)**

**STATEMENT**

By

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

**GENEVA, 20 NOVEMBER 2006**

Mr. President,

My delegation is most happy to see you presiding over the 6<sup>th</sup> Review Conference of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). We are confident that your experience and consummate diplomatic skills will help you steer the Conference to a successful outcome. I would like to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in this regard.

The Biological Weapons Convention is the first comprehensive disarmament instrument through which the international community committed itself to eliminating an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. This was followed by the Chemical Weapons Convention, which also included an effective verification and compliance regime, absent in the case of BTWC. Together, the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions provide a good example for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. India is committed to working towards further strengthening of the BTWC and its full implementation. India's over-arching legislation, the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems Act of May 2005, builds upon our existing regulatory framework related to prohibiting and preventing unlawful WMD-related activities and strengthens export controls.

Advances in biotechnology, genetic engineering and life sciences, especially in the past two decades, their dual-use nature and easier access to them have increased the danger of proliferation and hostile use of biological warfare 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. We must take this into account in our deliberations.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Review Conference offers a timely opportunity to review the operation of the Convention and to provide the assurance that the purposes and intent of the Convention are being realised. We should strengthen the Convention, mindful of its limitations in that it lacks an institutional capacity to oversee implementation, verify compliance with its obligations, and enforce the norm of non-development, non-production, non-possession and non-use of biological warfare agents. The Conference should, therefore, decide on further measures to buttress the Convention to meet the emerging challenges, including measures to ensure full implementation and compliance with its provisions.

With 155 States adhering to the Convention, we need to continue initiatives to achieve universal adherence to the Convention, including through the proposed Action Plan, though we are concerned about the follow-up of such a plan in the absence of institutional support. In our view, the best way to encourage more States to join the Convention is to demonstrate the cooperative possibilities for capacity building and technology exchanges that could result from their becoming party to it.

India is willing to support the creation of an institutional mechanism, including through possible expansion of the current support unit, which could assist the States Parties in the full and effective implementation of the Convention.

One of the primary tasks of the Review Conference is to carry out an article-wise review of the operation of the Convention and of its preamble. We would like the Conference to reiterate the additional understandings enunciated in the Final Declarations of previous review conferences, particularly on the scope of the prohibitions contained in the Article I of the Convention, including the understanding that the Convention unequivocally prohibits the use of biological weapons.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Review Conference is mandated to consider the work carried out during the inter-sessional period and take appropriate decisions. We would welcome progress in reaching a common understanding on the scope, content and implementation of codes of conduct for scientists carrying out research and development work in the relevant fields. We would also like to consider the issue of cooperation and assistance in developing national, regional and international capabilities for surveillance, detection, diagnosis and combating of infectious diseases. Through strengthening the infrastructure for combating naturally occurring infectious diseases, we would also enable States Parties to be prepared to deal with the aftermath of outbreak of infectious diseases caused deliberately by aberrant States or terrorists. We appreciate, in this regard, the assistance being rendered by the World Health Organisation, the Food and Agricultural Organisation and the World Organisation for Animal Health in combating human, plant and animal diseases.

India will support initiatives that would encourage participation of States Parties in confidence-building measures, which are a useful means for voluntary exchange of information in order to enhance trust in implementation of the Convention. The present scope of the CBMs appears adequate and its possible expansion may not be conducive to enhancing further participation of States Parties due to the greater demand it would make on their limited resources. Also, it would be a mistake to regard CBMs as an alternative to an effective compliance mechanism, including international verification. Only a multilaterally agreed mechanism for international verification of compliance can provide the assurance of observance of their legal obligations by States Parties and can act as deterrence against non-compliance.

While conscious of the continuing divergences among the States Parties on the issue of resuming negotiations on a verification protocol, we should not shy away from deliberations over the issue. And while doing all that we can to strengthen compliance with the Convention, India believes it is the responsibility of the States Parties to fully abide by its prohibitions and to take measures to effectively implement their obligations, including measures to deny terrorists access to biological agents and related equipment, materials and technology.

India strongly supports the launch of a new inter-sessional process of annual meetings of experts and States Parties. Indeed, this will be an important touchstone for the success of the Review Conference. When the last inter-sessional process started, there was some scepticism about its prospects. Contrary to these forebodings, however, States Parties gained considerably from it. Treating the BTWC regime as one of the live issues on the multilateral disarmament agenda strengthened the regime. Besides, the States Parties benefited from a most useful exchange of information and experiences on issues relevant to the effective implementation of the Convention. The knowledge creation and



its dissemination, which characterised the exchanges, were enriched by the participation in the process of relevant international organisations and national public-health stakeholders.

We hope to reach consensus on the specific issues that should be dealt with in the annual meeting of experts. As regards the meetings of States Parties, they should have a somewhat broader agenda, which would allow us to consider any issue relevant to implementation of the Convention and to revisit issues discussed in the previous years.

Since the format of the erstwhile inter-sessional process was conducive to its success, it might be advisable to follow the same model. We might, therefore, eschew the temptation to task the process with taking decisions on specific issues. Unburdened by the load of having to negotiate or take decisions, the annual exchanges, both among experts and representatives of States Parties, are likely to be unfettered and more productive. The task of decision-making can be best entrusted to the Review Conferences.

As bio-terrorism presents today the gravest threat to the Convention, the inter-sessional process should consider proactive and purposive measures that States Parties may take, for the effective prohibition and prevention of acquisition of biological agents by terrorists and for ensuring bio-security. International cooperation in strengthening national, regional and international capabilities for enhancing bio-preparedness could be another issue for the meeting of experts. This would be in line with the commitment States Parties have already undertaken to provide or support assistance to other States Parties exposed to danger as a result of violation of the Convention.

The disparity between the developed and developing countries in the field of science and technology has been growing. International cooperation, enjoined by Article X of the Convention, could help bridging this gap. We would welcome an expert meeting devoted to examining the current status of, and suggesting possible measures to enhance, the implementation of this Article. Previous Review Conferences had repeatedly called upon the UN Secretary General to propose a discussion of the means of improving the institutional mechanisms to facilitate the fullest possible cooperation under Article X by including it on the agenda of a relevant UN body. The meeting of experts provides the best avenue to do so.

We would like to place on record our deep appreciation for the contributions made by international organisations and NGOs in preparing for this Conference, including those by the British-American Security Information Council (BASIC), the Biological Weapons Prevention Programme (BWPP), Bradford University, Pugwash and the Verification Research Training and Information Centre (VERTIC).

The central issue in our Conference, Mr. President, is to seek ways to strengthen BTWC in the light of recent challenges. This would include all measures to increase its salience and build further support for the core normative standard enshrined in the Convention. My delegation remains committed to assist you in this task.