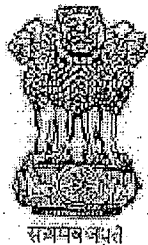


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**PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA
TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT**

**Meeting of Experts of States Parties to the
Biological Weapons Convention**

GENEVA, 24th August 2009

STATEMENT

BY

**D.B. Venkatesh Varma
Minister
Permanent Mission of India
to the Conference on Disarmament**

Mr. Chairman,

The Indian delegation would like to convey its congratulations to you on your assumption of the Chairmanship of this meeting. We would like to convey our deep appreciation for all your efforts and that of the Implementation Support Unit for the excellent ground work undertaken for the Meeting of Experts.

India associates itself with the statement made by the delegation of Cuba on behalf of the Non Aligned Movement.

Mr. Chairman,

India attaches the highest priority to the further strengthening of the BWC as it was the first disarmament treaty that eliminated an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. We believe that only a multilaterally agreed mechanism for verification of compliance can provide the assurance of observance of compliance obligations by States Parties and act as a deterrence against non compliance. We also believe that the decision regarding strengthening of the BWC and to ensure its effective implementation should be taken by the Review Conference based on the principle of consensus.

India has consistently underlined the importance of international cooperation with regard to issues related to BWC. While disease surveillance and mitigation remain primarily a national responsibility, it is recognized that disease and epidemics do not respect national borders and biological agents need to be tracked so that they do not enter new regions. This aspect has made international collaboration crucial for epidemic control.

India believes that the promotional aspects of Article X are a crucial element in strengthening the BWC and in achieving universal adherence. While there are several examples of international cooperation, it is also a fact that denial of materials, equipment and technology related to peaceful uses of biotechnology including disease surveillance and control continue to exist and hamper legitimate uses of biological materials for peaceful purposes.

The BWC State Parties should facilitate the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technical information for the uses of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins for peaceful purposes consistent with their obligation under the Convention. This would benefit developing countries to meet their development needs, including improving public health and in building a robust biotechnology industry. It would also promote universality of the Convention and would be instrumental in establishing linkages amongst States Parties leading to a higher level of confidence in the Convention. The strengthened implementation of the provisions of Article III would ensure that the cooperation envisaged under Article X is not abused.

Effective export controls are an essential component of international cooperation to ensure that disease causing organisms and pathogens do not fall into the hands of terrorists and are used only for peaceful purposes. India's export control system effectively regulates the export of almost 150 micro-organisms and toxins in the category of bacteria, fungi, parasites, viruses, rickettsials, toxins and plant pathogens. Genetically modified micro-organisms or genetic elements that contain nucleic acid sequences associated with pathogenicity and are derived from the listed organisms are also controlled. India has submitted information on the outbreak of communicable diseases in the country in its 2007 national submission on BWC CBMs.

India attaches importance to the two agenda items for this meeting of experts. We approach this meeting with an open mind; we will put forward our approach and perspectives and hope to benefit from the presentations made by other delegations. We believe that effective and efficient disease surveillance system is necessary to detect cases of alleged use of biological weapons and suspicious outbreaks of diseases. The threat posed by bioterrorism should be addressed effectively. Natural pandemics such as the recent Avian and H1N1 outbreaks underline that these threats are real and international cooperation to tackle them is imperative.

India has put into place comprehensive systems for disease surveillance to deal with human, animal and plant diseases. The system has been developed in consultation with WHO, OIE and FAO. Our delegation will be making presentations on Disease Surveillance and International Cooperation in terms of capacity building assistance during the course of this week.

We pledge our support for a successful outcome of this meeting of experts.
