



**Permanent Mission of India
to the Conference on Disarmament**

**Annual Meeting of the State Parties to the
Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention**

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Geneva**

Statement by

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Permanent Representative of India
to the Conference on Disarmament**

Mr. Chairman,

I join other delegations in congratulating you on your assumption of the Chairmanship of this meeting. My delegation is pleased to see a fellow NAM country chairing the annual Meeting of States Parties in this very important year for the Biological Weapons Convention.

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

Mr. Chairman,

India attaches importance to the BWC as the first disarmament treaty banning an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. India fully supports initiatives to universalize and strengthen the Convention and ensure full implementation of its provisions by all States Parties. The danger that terrorists could acquire and resort to the use of biological warfare agents and toxins has added a new challenge to the Convention, and we must find effective ways to address it. We believe that only a multilaterally agreed mechanism for verification of compliance can provide the assurance that all States Parties to the BWC are in compliance of their obligations under the Convention and that emerging threats are effectively addressed.

This year's Meeting of the States Parties to the BWC is the last in the current inter-sessional period instituted pursuant to the decision of the 6th Review Conference in 2006. Allow me therefore to reflect on the work that we have done since 2006 and the possibilities for the 7th Review Conference to be held next year.

India has participated actively in the inter-sessional Meetings of Experts and States Parties. These meetings have helped enhance our understanding of several important issues including national implementation and regional and sub-regional cooperation, advances in bio-science and technology, disease surveillance and mitigation, biosafety and biosecurity and Article X implementation. We are satisfied with the meetings of the inter-sessional period and look forward to building on the understandings reached at these meetings.

As we conclude the current inter-sessional process, we naturally look towards the next Review Conference. Some events have been held in the past few months to allow us to exchange perspectives and build common ground. In this regard, India appreciates the initiative of China, Canada and the ISU for holding the Beijing workshop in early November. Such exchanges should continue in a comprehensive and transparent

manner. India believes that the Review Conference provides an opportunity to review the implementation of the Convention in its entirety, and consider steps that may contribute to strengthening the Convention, to further its implementation and to promote its universality. Strengthening the BWC in all its aspects is critical for the international community is facing threats emanating from misuse of biological materials and toxins both by States and terrorists. Any decision regarding strengthening of the Convention should be taken by the Review Conference on the basis of consensus. India hopes that all States Parties will contribute constructively to ensure a successful Review Conference.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me now turn to the subject of this year's meetings i.e. promoting common understanding and effective action on the provision of assistance and coordination in the case of alleged use of biological or toxin weapons.

We note that Articles VI and VII of the Convention provide for the possibility of investigations by the Security Council in case of breach of obligations by a State Party and the provision of assistance by other States Parties in such cases. UN Secretary General's mechanism also exists for investigations into alleged use. In accordance with the understandings developed in previous Review Conferences the Security Council can take the advice of WHO in carrying out investigations and the United Nations could take the assistance inter alia of WHO, OIE and FAO in providing assistance. We also note that many delegations pointed out at the Meeting of Experts the need to develop more clarity and understanding on Articles VI and VII and the operation of the UN Secretary General's mechanism.

The task associated with investigating alleged use and provision of assistance in case of alleged use is complex. This complexity arises from the multi-sectoral nature of the problem which involves public health, security and law enforcement elements, as well as the international dimension of disease. It is therefore important for us to consider all the ramifications of the situation should a case of alleged use come to the fore and how we could enhance international capabilities for assistance and coordination in responding to, investigating and mitigating the effects of cases of alleged use or suspicious outbreak of diseases.

We recognize that the institutional mechanisms for combating the outbreak of infectious disease remain the same, irrespective of whether the outbreak is natural, accidental or deliberate. However, surveillance and detection of a natural or deliberate outbreak will have implications with respect to the Convention. Facilities for detection, diagnosis,

production of prophylactic vaccines and effective treatment need to be developed for establishing proper biodefence measures.

International cooperation is an imperative both in investigating alleged use of biological weapons and mitigation and control of the effects of an attack. The primary responsibility for surveillance and combating of infectious diseases is of a State Party. However, States Parties to the Convention and the concerned international organizations could play an important role in providing assistance to States Parties in need of developing national capabilities in accordance with the provisions of the Convention. In this context India would like to stress the importance of full and effective implementation of Article X of the Convention. The BWC State Parties must facilitate the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and technology related to the use of biological agents and toxins for peaceful purposes consistent with their obligations under the Convention. We believe that strengthened implementation of Article III of the Convention would ensure that the cooperation envisaged under Article X is not abused.

India has put in place comprehensive systems for disease surveillance in cooperation with international organizations including WHO, OIE and FAO. India has formulated national guidelines on biological disasters covering management of epidemics and pandemics and bioterrorism, including agro-terrorism. Emphasis has been laid on biosafety and biosecurity aspects of valuable biological materials.

Effective export controls are also essential in ensuring that biological agents and toxins do not fall into the hands of terrorists and are used only for peaceful purposes. India is committed to maintaining effective export controls matching the highest international standards. The export of about 150 micro-organisms is controlled under India's export control regulations.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate India's firm commitment to the BWC. We look forward to listening to the perspectives of other delegations on the subject of this meeting as well as the Review Conference. You can count on the full support of my delegation in our work.

Thank you.