

**Statement on behalf of India by D. B. Venkatesh Varma  
at the Prepcom for the Seventh Review Conference,  
Geneva, 13-15 April 2011**

Mr President,

It gives us pleasure to congratulate you on your nomination as the President-designate of the Seventh Review Conference to be held in Geneva in December this year. You can be assured of the full cooperation and support of the Indian delegation for the success of your endeavours. We also convey our appreciation for your diligent efforts in undertaking inter-sessional consultations.

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

India attaches the highest importance to the BTWC as the first non-discriminatory disarmament treaty banning a complete category of weapons of mass destruction. It is thus more than a non-proliferation or an arms control treaty. States Parties to the Treaty have committed not to use in any way and under any circumstances biological agents or toxins not consistent with the prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes. As per the Final Document of the 6<sup>th</sup> Review Conference, we have all undertaken in Article I never in any circumstances to develop, produce, stockpile or otherwise acquire or retain weapons, equipment, or means of delivery designed to use such agents or toxins for hostile purposes or in armed conflict in order to exclude completely and forever the possibility of their use.

We reiterate our commitment to the full implementation of the BTWC and its universalization. States Parties must ensure that their commitments and obligations under the Convention are fully and effectively implemented. The Seventh Review Conference will be an important opportunity to review the operation of the preamble and the provisions of the Convention. It will also give us the opportunity to discuss and agree on measures that would strengthen the Convention and ensure its full implementation. This is necessary in view of the new challenges to international peace and security emanating from proliferation trends, including the threat posed by terrorists or other non-state actors seeking access to biological agents or toxins for terrorist purposes. The Review Conference should send a clear signal of the collective determination of all States Parties to address these common challenges.

The Convention vests the Review Conference with a strong legal basis to review the operation of the Convention. Decisions of the Review Conference should be taken by consensus.

A central element of the operation of the Convention is compliance by all State parties with their obligations under the Convention. This is a multilateral treaty. Verification of compliance is critically important for States parties to be collectively reassured that the provisions of the Convention are being realized. In this context, India would like to reiterate its support for the objective of a multilaterally agreed mechanism for verification of compliance that can provide the assurance of observance of their legal obligations by states parties and act as a deterrent against non-compliance.

CBMs are an important transparency measure to enhance trust in implementation of the Convention. We believe CBMs are not an alternative to an effective mechanism for verification of compliance. CBMs are not declarations and cannot be treated as such for

assessing non-compliance. India is willing to look at proposals to update CBM formats related to the object and purposes of the Convention and in a manner that do not impose an undue burden on State parties.

A review of new scientific and technological developments of relevance to the Convention is mandated by Article XII. Given the rapid and wide-ranging pace of developments in biological science and technology there is wide recognition that these developments could have implications for the implementation of the BWC. There is therefore an imperative need for the Review Conference to agree on a mechanism for reviewing such developments in a focussed and continuous manner.

India stresses the importance of full and effective implementation of Article X of the Convention. The BTWC 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 would ensure that the cooperation envisaged under Article X is not abused. While legitimate peaceful uses should not be hampered, India is not in favour of unregulated transfers. Effective national export controls are important in ensuring that biological agents and toxins are used only for peaceful purposes and do not fall into the hands of terrorists. India is committed to maintaining effective export controls matching the highest international standards. We also support assistance for states Parties seeking such support in strengthening their respective national systems for biosafety and biosecurity.

The Review Conference will provide an opportunity for us to look back at the last inter-sessional process and look to the future operation of the Convention. We would underline that the Convention itself does not provide for an inter-sessional process. It is vitally important for all States parties to approach the Review Conference preparations in an open, inclusive and realistic manner. The outcome of the Review Conference should strike the right balance with regard to the interests of States parties while maintaining the integrity of the Convention.

Mr President, we are encouraged by your commitment to full consultations and consensus as we move forward. The success of the Review Conference will depend as much on the intensive and inclusive preparatory process as on the political will that States Parties will bring to the deliberations. For India's part, you can be assured of our strong commitment to a productive and successful Review Conference.

Thank you.