



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

**7th Review Conference of the States Parties to the
Convention on the Prohibition of the Development,
Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and
Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction**

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STATEMENT

By

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Statement by Ambassador Sujata Mehta, Permanent Representative of India to the CD, Head of Delegation to the 7th Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction

Mr. President,

It is a great pleasure to congratulate you on your election as the President of the Seventh Review Conference of BTWC. We would also like to congratulate the members of the Bureau on their election. We appreciate your energetic and transparent efforts in preparation for this Conference. You can be assured of the full cooperation of the Indian delegation in seeking a successful outcome for this Conference.

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

Mr. President,

India attaches high importance to the BTWC as the first disarmament treaty banning an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. Through this instrument, 165 States Parties to the treaty have pledged never to “develop, produce, stockpile or otherwise acquire or retain” biological weapons and have committed not to use in any way and under any circumstances biological agents or toxins not consistent with prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes.

India is committed to improving the effectiveness of the BTWC and strengthening its implementation. We also support efforts for its universalization. Since 1994, strengthening the Convention and its effective implementation has been the overriding imperative for states parties. This should hold true for this Review Conference as well. It is important that all decisions of the Review Conference are taken by consensus.

This is an important opportunity to review the operation of the preamble and the provisions of the Convention, while providing an opportunity to agree on measures to strengthen the Convention and ensure its full implementation. This is also 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, especially bioterrorism.

Further, the Review Conference should underline that a central element of the operation of the Convention is compliance by all States 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 all 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. National implementation remains the bedrock of the Convention.

Mr. President, we view the Review Conference as an opportunity to discuss and agree on measures that would strengthen the Convention and ensure its full implementation. I would now like to outline India's position on some issues that merit greater attention of States Parties at this Review Conference and which could find reflection in a balanced outcome of this meeting.

The full and effective implementation of Article X of the Convention continues to be of great importance for India. 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. India supports the Working Paper presented by NAM on establishment of a mechanism on-Article X.

While legitimate peaceful uses should not be hampered, India is not in favour of unregulated transfers. We believe that strengthened implementation of Article III would ensure that the cooperation envisaged under Article X is not abused. 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 or used for purposes prohibited by the Convention. 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.

CBMs are an important transparency measure to enhance trust in implementation of the Convention. India will support initiatives that would encourage participation of States Parties in the CBMs. As we stated during the PrepCom we are willing to look at proposals to update CBM formats so that they do not impose an undue burden on State parties and encourage submission of CBMs by a larger number of State Parties. CBMs should be strictly focused on the object and purpose of the Convention. 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 compliance with the treaty's obligations. Issues relating to investigation of alleged use should be addressed by State Parties in accordance with the provisions of the Convention.

The last Review Conference established the ISU as an administrative body with a specific mandate. While we should explore how UNODA could be strengthened on BTWC related issues India is not opposed to renewing the mandate of the ISU at this Review Conference. Established UN principles

for its bodies such as equitable geographical distribution, rotation and impartiality should be followed while maintaining the efficiency of the Secretariat as an administrative tool to assist States Parties strictly in accordance with the mandate of the Review Conference.

The Review Conference provides us the opportunity to look back at the last inter-sessional process and look to the future operation of the Convention. We believe that the last inter-sessional process was useful in deliberating on various issues related to the implementation of the Convention and in attracting the participation of a number of key stakeholders, including industry and academia. In the next inter-sessional process we should build on these useful features and seek to address its shortcomings. A balanced and coherent treatment of issues under the responsibility and clear oversight of the States Parties would be essential for the success of the future inter-sessional process. We believe that the Convention vests decision making powers in the Review Conference. This is important for maintaining the integrity of the Convention. The inter-sessional process can be useful for exchange of views and information sharing based on an effective use of time allocated to Expert meetings and Annual meeting of State Parties.

Lastly, let me touch on the issue of S&T review under the Convention. Article XII of the Convention states that the review of the Convention shall take into account any new scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention. 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 BTWC. There is considerable convergence of views among States Parties on the need for focused and continuous review of S&T developments that have implications for the Convention. India has presented a Working Paper to the Review Conference on this subject. We hope to find support from the States Parties for the ideas contained in our Working Paper. Progress on this issue could represent significant value addition at this Conference.
Mr. President,

In conclusion, we would like to stress our commitment to the BTWC and its full and effective implementation. We hope that under your leadership this Review Conference will be able to achieve a good outcome that strikes the right balance with regard to the interests of States parties while maintaining the integrity of the Convention.

Thank you.