

Statement by India at the BWC Meeting of Experts, Geneva, July 16-20, 2012

Mr. Chairman,

The Indian delegation would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the Chairmanship of the 2012 Meeting of Experts. We commend your efforts in making a good start to the meetings in this crucial first year of the new inter-sessional programme.

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

Mr. Chairman,

While we will share our perspectives on the issues on the agenda of this Meeting of Experts through presentations and interventions in the relevant sessions this week, at this stage we would like to recount a few issues which are of importance to our delegation.

First, India attaches high priority to the further strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention and 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.

Second, with the constructive approach of States Parties, the 7th Review Conference was able to reach agreement on a new inter-sessional programme with three standing agenda items and two other items which will be considered for two years each. The new inter-sessional

programme thus provides for focused and structured deliberations on some of the priority issues for the BWC. We note that the Review Conference agreed that the purpose of the current inter-sessional programme is to discuss and promote common understanding and effective action on the identified issues. Decisions regarding strengthening the Convention should be taken by the Review Conference based on the principle of consensus. We believe that a multilaterally agreed mechanism for verification of compliance can provide the assurance of observance of the legal obligations by the States Parties and act as deterrence against non-compliance.

Third, the inter-sessional work which includes participation of experts to facilitate our deliberations is useful in enhancing understanding on issues related to the Convention.

Fourth, the rapid pace of developments in biological science and technology has possible implications for the Convention, not only in respect of uses contrary to the provisions of the Convention but also peaceful and beneficial uses and international cooperation. Realizing the implications of S&T developments for the Convention, at the 7th Review Conference India had proposed inclusion of review of S&T developments as a standing agenda item in the current inter-sessional programme. A number of important topics are to be covered under this agenda item addressing the risks and benefits of biological sciences and technology. We believe that the measures to mitigate biological risks should be proportional to the assessed risk and should not hamper activities necessary for prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes.

Fifth, India believes that national implementation is an important pillar of the Convention. We have a broad-based regulatory framework to prevent the misuse of biological science and technology. A comprehensive

system for disease surveillance is in place in India and national guidelines on biological disasters covering management of epidemics and pandemics and bio-terrorism have been formulated. India is committed to maintaining effective national export controls matching the highest international standards and is engaged in other forums so as to achieve these objectives.

Sixth, we continue to attach high importance to the full and effective implementation of Article X of the Convention. The BWC States Parties must facilitate the fullest possible exchange of equipments, materials and technology for the peaceful use of biological agents and toxins consistent with their obligations under the Convention. We look forward to the implementation of the understandings on Article X reached at the 7th Review Conference. There should be a balance between Article X implementation with provisions of Article III of the Convention.

Seventh, CBMs are an important transparency measure to enhance trust in implementation of the Convention. In accordance with the relevant decision of the 7th Review Conference we should look at ways to increase the number of States Parties making CBM submissions in the agreed forms.

Mr. Chairman,

The Indian delegation would like to assure you of its full cooperation in the discharge of your duties.

Thank you.