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

STATEMENT

BY

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**Preparatory Committee for the
Eighth Review Conference of the BWC**

Geneva, 26 April 2016

Mr President,

It is a pleasure to congratulate you on your nomination as the President-designate of the Eighth Review Conference. We appreciate your extensive consultations and assure you of the full support of the Indian delegation.

2. India associates itself with the statement made by the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-aligned Movement and Other States.

3. We attach high importance to the BWC as the first non-discriminatory disarmament treaty banning a complete category of weapons of mass destruction. We reaffirm our support for the final document of the Seventh Review Conference and the outcome documents of all previous Review Conferences.

4. The forthcoming Review Conference will provide an important opportunity for us to review the implementation of the Convention and adopt a forward looking declaration, taking into account not just compliance of State Parties of their obligations under the Convention but also to address emerging challenges 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. India supports a robust consultation process as envisaged by UNGA Resolution 70/74. As part of broader outreach, India will be hosting a Regional Workshop in cooperation with UNODA and the EU in autumn this year.

5. India is committed to the full implementation of the BWC. We believe that States Parties must ensure that their obligations under the Convention are fully implemented. 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 supports the objective of a multilaterally agreed mechanism for verification of compliance that can provide the assurance of compliance by States Parties and act as a deterrent against non-compliance. India shares the widespread interest amongst States Parties to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the implementation of the Convention through the negotiation and conclusion of a Protocol for that purpose covering all provisions of the Convention

6. CBMs are an important transparency measure to enhance trust but 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. India has been up to date in submission of its CBMs.

7. A review of new scientific and technological developments of relevance to the Convention is mandated by Article XII. While India submitted a Working Paper on conducting S&T review at the last Review Conference, we are willing to give consideration to various proposals, including the one tabled by the Russian Federation, as well as for the purpose of reaching common understandings on a framework and criteria for assessing risks of relevance to the Convention. In our view, measures taken to mitigate biological risks should be proportional to the assessed risk and not hamper legitimate peaceful activities including international cooperation. Further, there should be no hindrance to peaceful activities such as vaccine development, which are important for developing countries for meeting their public health needs.

8. India stresses the importance of full and effective implementation of Article X of the Convention to generate equitable benefits for States Parties, in particular developing countries and we hope that the Review Conference will respond to this need through concrete measures. In pursuance of the decision of the last Review Conference, India submitted a Working Paper in December 2014 containing its National Report on Article X Implementation. While India continues to attach high importance to the full and effective implementation of Article X, we believe that strengthened implementation of Article III would ensure that cooperation envisaged under Article X is taken forward in mutual confidence.

9. Effective national export controls are important tools to prevent the misuse of biological agents and toxins for purposes prohibited by the Convention or falling into the hands of terrorists, which is a major concern for the international community. India is committed to maintaining effective export controls matching the highest international standards.

10. Recognizing the importance of building broad based support in the BWC, to strengthen implementation of Article III, India joined the United States in submitting a Working Paper in 2015 entitled

‘Strengthening Implementation of Article III of the BTWC’. We hope that this Working Paper will help build common ground so that specific decisions can be taken at the Eighth Review Conference.

11. Article VII assistance is a legal obligation under the Convention. It is clear that the lack of a comprehensive Protocol to strengthen implementation of all aspects of the BWC has created a gap in the international community’s capacity to respond effectively and provide assistance to States Parties exposed to dangers as a result of violation of the BWC. India and France proposed in 2015 the establishment of a database for assistance in the framework of Article VII and will be tabling a Working Paper at this Prepcom. We see this as an operational and concrete tool providing an incentive for the Convention’s universalization. We hope that appropriate decisions can be taken at the Eighth Review Conference.

12. 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. When first established a decade ago, the inter-sessional process was intended to be an interim phase to help get through a difficult period. It has achieved better than expected success. But it is also clear that the global regime against biological weapons and other risks to health security cannot be strengthened without strengthening the Convention and its universalization.

13. The long-term sustainability of the Convention should be rooted in legally binding measures with all State Parties endowing collective confidence in the Convention rather than pursuing measures to protect their specific national interests. In this, the BWC could draw inspiration from the success of the CWC. We are aware that achieving this goal will take time. In the meantime, we should look for practical and pragmatic solutions on specific issues for follow up in the inter-sessional period, while maintaining the integrity of Review Conference decisions which should be taken by consensus.

14. The success of the Eighth Review Conference will depend as much on an intensive and inclusive preparatory process as on the political will that States Parties would bring to the table. For our part, you can be assured of India’s strong commitment to a productive and successful Review Conference.

Thank you.