

Swedish statement at the conference of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, Geneva 10 – 14 November

Mr. Chairman,

Let me first of all welcome you to the chair. Under your capable leadership I am confident that we will achieve meaningful results and I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Also, let me at the outset say that Sweden fully aligns herself with the statement made by the Italian Presidency of the European Union.

Sweden attaches high priority to the reinforcement of the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention. The need to strengthen the Convention is increasingly important, given the scientific development in this field and the risk that terrorists may acquire biological weapons.

National implementation of the Convention, including penal legislation, is of vital importance, as is the need to establish mechanisms and structures with regards to the handling of microorganisms.

The credibility of a Convention rests with States Parties' compliance with it. The compliance efforts start at the national level with the implementation of the Convention within the legal and administrative framework, including a functioning penal legislation. With this in mind Sweden is ready to assist States Parties seeking assistance with the implementation of their obligations under the Convention.

A strengthened Convention also requires other mechanisms *inter alia* concerning monitoring and verification. In a longer perspective it might be worthwhile to consider if we can draw some useful conclusions from the experience gained in this field.

Sweden is fully committed to the BTWC working programme for the years 2003 - 2005 adopted by the Fifth Review Conference in November 2002. Concrete results emanating from this working programme is of crucial importance for us to reach our common objective, a strengthened Convention. In this connection Sweden will later on in the week present our thoughts regarding the security and oversight of pathogenic microorganisms and toxins. We will argue for the need to increase international cooperation in the field of biosafety and biosecurity.

Sweden also believes that Intergovernmental organisations have an important role to play in the work against biological and toxin weapons. We hope that it will be possible for them to participate in the 2004 and 2005 meetings.

In conclusion, Sweden would like this meeting of States Parties to take stock of the outcome of the expert meeting in August and to identify common elements, which could be used in a final document on how to promote effective implementation of the Convention at the national level.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman