

**MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE BIOLOGICAL  
AND TOXIN WEAPONS CONVENTION: GENEVA, 10-14  
NOVEMBER 2003**

**STATEMENT BY THE UNITED KINGDOM**

- Mr Chairman, speaking on behalf of the United Kingdom, and as one of the Depositary Governments of the Biological Weapons Convention, I should like to begin by fully endorsing the Statement made earlier by the European Union.
  
- I believe that this meeting of States Parties presents us with an opportunity to reflect on the developments relating to the Convention that have taken place over the last two years as well as looking forward to the meetings that will take place in 2004 and 2005, culminating in the 6<sup>th</sup> Review Conference.
  
- It is no exaggeration to say that international efforts to strengthen the BWC were in serious crisis following the demise of the Protocol and suspension of the Review Conference in 2001. The way ahead at that point appeared bleak and extremely uncertain.

- That we have emerged from the general mood of pessimism that accompanied much of the discussions around that time is due in no small measure to your own efforts Mr Chairman in finding the compromise proposal that proved to be the basis for agreement in 2002.
  
- The programme of work, to which all States Parties gave their support on that occasion, ensured that there would continue to be an international forum for dealing with the threat of BW proliferation.
  
- It also set a new and innovative course for strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention. The focus would henceforth be on practical measures, freely agreed by States Parties. One short phrase from the Review Conference decision of 2002 encapsulates both the nature of the task we have set ourselves and serves as an eloquent mandate for these meetings. We are all enjoined to “promote common understanding and effective action”.
  
- The United Kingdom believes that the current work programme had a most auspicious beginning with the Experts’ meeting in August this year. It was impressive to see the high level of participation from over 80 States Parties, sending some 400 individual delegates – a more

significant commitment than at any time during the Protocol negotiations.

- As a result, one important objective has already been achieved. The impressive thematic presentations on both agenda items by countries from all the regional groupings has ensured a sharing of national experience and expertise which will form the basis for our discussion in the course of this week.
- I should, at this point, like to reiterate the offer of assistance we made in this regard at the August meeting to provide the necessary advice and guidance in the areas of relevant national legislation and regulation.
- The United Kingdom believes that the Experts' meeting was particularly successful because it was attended by none of the rancour and division that had accompanied and undermined our previous negotiating efforts.
- I can assure you Mr Chairman that the United Kingdom will be looking to work closely with you and all other States Parties in the

course of this week, to ensure that the co-operative spirit and positive momentum of the August meeting are maintained.

- It will be important that we reach agreement on identifying the key issues that can be identified from the material and ideas presented by our Experts in the areas of legislation and regulation. A precedent will thereby have been set for the meetings that will follow over the next two years and the topics on which we will need to report at the 2006 Review Conference.
  
- Mr Chairman, the United Kingdom believes that a successful outcome this week will send a powerful and important message that the international community is united in recognising the threat from biological weapons and united in its agreement on the measures needed to combat that threat.
  
- We may also in the process establish a new and effective paradigm for multilateral arms control. In light of the pessimism expressed by some about the prospects for strengthening this Convention just two years ago, our work this week will, in the view of the United Kingdom, represent a significant achievement and commitment by all the States Parties to the BWC.

- Thank you Mr Chairman.

