



## Press Release

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### **FIFTH REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION CONTINUES GENERAL DEBATE**

The Fifth 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, commonly known as the Biological Weapons Convention, continued its general debate this afternoon.

Speakers who took the floor stressed the importance of a multilateral approach in dealing with international disarmament, including issues related to strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention. Several speakers also expressed the hope that work on the draft Protocol to strengthen verification of the implementation of the Convention could be revived.

Speaking at the afternoon meeting were representatives of Cuba, New Zealand, Brazil, Croatia, Canada, Iran, the Russian Federation, and Libya.

In accordance with Rule 19 of the Rules of Procedure, Iraq, Iran and Libya exercised their rights of reply to the statement made by the United States during the morning meeting.

#### Statements

CARLOS AMAT FORES (Cuba) said he believed that it would only be possible to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention within a universal multilateral framework and that unilateral moves by single or small groups of State parties would only undermine the international legal framework on which such strengthening must take place.

Similarly, the fight against bioterrorism could also only be successfully achieved by a multilateral approach to ensure that the necessary transparency and basis of confidence was present. He also expressed the belief that the mandate of the Ad Hoc Group was still valid. Cuba held the opinion that its resolve on these issues came from first-hand experience as it had been the victim on several occasions of biological attacks against its crops and livestock. He cited suspicious outbreaks of Swine fever in 1979 and 1980,

Sugarcane Blight in 1978, and the outbreaks of Blue Tobacco Mould and Dengue Fever.

(more)

CLIVE PEARSON (New Zealand) welcomed fresh ideas and considered that thinking outside the box was necessary. It was prepared to consider new ideas alongside the old ones. New Zealand suggested that the draft Protocol, which had been under discussion in the Ad Hoc Group meetings, could be introduced and recognized as an official Review Conference document. Hence, it affirmed support for the multilateral process through the Ad Hoc Group. New Zealand laid out what it considered to be the minimum that must be achieved by the Fifth Review Conference which included sending out an unequivocal message as to the commitment of the States parties to the Convention to the aims and objectives established to date; to re-affirm the commitment to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention; and to take these discussions forward.

CELINA M. ASSUMPCAO DO VALLE PEREIRA (Brazil) highlighted her country's concern about the lack of commitment of the major players to the multilateral approach in international arms control. Brazil cited the deadlock of the Conference of Disarmament, concerns over the continuing integrity of the Anti-Ballistic Missiles Treaty and the uncertainty of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty to support this view. Brazil reiterated its condemnation of terrorist acts and stated that the Fifth Review Conference will have a challenging task to accomplish. Brazil called for all efforts to be made to overcome the deadlock reached within the Ad Hoc Group, having stressed its historic and ongoing dedication to this control regime on both the international and national levels. The Biological Weapons Convention had two main pillars: one regarding non-proliferation and the other concerning technical cooperation for peaceful ends. Brazil expressed concerns that the commitment towards peaceful technical cooperation was not being utilized as it should be. It urged the States parties to re-examine Article XIV of the draft Protocol for tools useful in achieving this end.

SPOMENKA CEK (Croatia) began by reiterating that Croatia had never had or attempted to obtain biological weapons in contravention of the Biological Weapons Convention. She provided a brief overview of the defensive research that Croatia had carried out. Ms. Cek explained that this had focused on three aspects, the personal (such as the defence of an individual), the technical (in examining ways to inoculate against and treat any possible biological attack) and the special (by, for example, identifying possible users of such weapons). Ms. Cek also highlighted national concerns that a biological attack might take the form of a traditional strike on a facility containing pathogenic organisms in large numbers in order to instigate an accidental release. Croatia praised the work carried out in the Ad Hoc Group, calling for it to be restarted, even if a change of format was unavoidable, and went on to describe the draft Protocol as suitably holistic and appropriate to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention, although some concerns of commercial proprietary information were raised.

CHRISTOPHER WESTDAL (Canada) stated that the long history of the governance regime for biological weapons, since 1925, illustrated that this evil category of Weapons of Mass Destruction was repugnant to the conscience of mankind. The events of 11 September had given fresh energy and resolution to the concepts of strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention. In relation to bioterrorism, Canada explained that although terrorists did not sign treaties, in a fully implemented multilateral regime no party of any kind was above the law. The Canadian statement went on to focus on some of the positive events that have occurred since the last Review Conference. These included the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the large amount of international cooperation designed to foster peaceful benefits from biological sciences. Canada once again expressed its commitment to its obligation to provide cooperation for peaceful applications of this same technology.

Mr. Westdal expressed the four aims of his delegation for this Review Conference. These were credible action, from activating and animating measures already agreed upon in previous Review Conferences to increasing cooperation with international organizations in such fields as disease control and monitoring; the instigation of an open-ended inter-sessional institution to oversee the implementation work; universality, increasing the pressure on the almost fifty States yet to accede to the Biological Weapons Convention; and an effort to build public confidence in multilateral actions on the international stage.

ALI-ASHGAR SOLTANIEH (Iran) reiterated Iran's condemnation of the terrorist attacks of 11 September and offered its condolences for this inhumane action. He stated that the more recent use of anthrax by terrorists illustrated the urgent need for an internationally legally binding instrument to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). This should be followed by the establishment of an organization to implement the provisions of such an instrument. Iran attached great importance to multilateral disarmament and arms control and the Biological Weapons Convention was necessary for international peace and security. Iran utilized the active role it had taken in the Ad Hoc Group negotiations to demonstrate this. Iran clearly believed that despite welcoming constructive proposals supplementing the previous multilateral discussions, it could not proceed into the routine Review Process of the Convention at the Fifth Review Conference without being sure of the fate of the multilateral negotiations to strengthen the Convention.

Mr. Soltanieh stated that selective and unilateral approaches and alternatives to the Protocol had no prospect of strengthening the BWC. Iran called on non-States parties to accede to the Convention, especially those with an advanced biotechnology industry, as soon as possible. Iran also expressed concerns that present trade restrictions increased the technology gap between developing and industrialized nations and that arbitrary parallel regimes were against the decisions reached at the Fourth Review Conference that Article III concerns over the transfers of technology destined for the production of biological weapons should not impinge on the Article X obligation to facilitate the peaceful transfer of such technology. Iran also raised concerns that the text of the Convention did not specifically include a clause relating to use of biological weapons, and called for either this to be inserted in Article I or for all States Parties to withdraw any reservations still

present in relation to the 1925 Geneva Protocol which specifically prohibited use of biological agents.

LEONID SKOTNIKOV (the Russian Federation) emphasized the importance that the Russian Federation had been giving and was still giving to the terminology and objective criteria of the Protocol. According to Mr. Skotnikov, many Russian ideas were reflected in the Composite Text of the Protocol. The Russian delegation was of the opinion that the adoption of the Protocol would be the most important and effective means of strengthening the Convention, and that the Protocol could still be further improved upon and eventually adopted. Multilateral negotiations on the elaboration of the Protocol within the Ad Hoc Group of BWC States parties should thus continue, especially with States that had the most developed biotechnological industries.

TAJOURI SHRADI TAJOURI (Libya) stated that Libya historically has complied with the spirit of the Biological Weapons Convention. Libya was concerned about the lack of an international commitment to pursue the aims of peaceful technology transfer laid down in Article X. Libya called for the completion of the Ad Hoc Group mandate and reiterated its dedication to this end. In conclusion, Libya called upon Israel and other non-States parties to accede to the Biological Weapons Convention.

#### Rights of Reply

In response to the statement made by the United States in the morning meeting, representatives of Iraq, Iran and Libya exercised their rights of reply according to Rule 19 of the Rules of Procedure.

SAMIR K. K. AL-NIMA (Iraq), speaking in a right of reply, accused the United States of using double standards in naming countries that had allegedly violated the provisions of the Convention. The United States had only mentioned Arab Muslim countries and had disregarded the violations of some other countries, namely Israel. Mr. Al-Nima clarified that Iraq had fulfilled its obligations under Section C, Resolution 987, not to acquire weapons of mass destruction. He also stated that Iraq had destroyed all weapons of mass destruction. Iraq further elaborated on its compliance with UNSCOM measures. UNSCOM had withdrawn on the advice of the United States before bombing attacks on Iraq in 1998. Iraq, therefore, denied the allegations made by the United States.

ALI-ASHGAR SOLTANIEH (Iran), exercising his right of reply, categorically rejected allegations by the United States that Iran had violated the Convention. He described the accusations of the United States as Abaseless@. Iran had adhered to all treaties related to weapons of mass destruction. The United States was not in favour of multilateralism and was to blame for the failure of the 24th session of the Ad Hoc Group, and the unfortunate fate of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the Anti-Ballistic Missiles Treaty and the Kyoto Protocol. Iran also accused the United States of violating the provisions of the Convention by transferring deadly biological agents to Israel and other allies as well as by conducting research and development in the area of biological weapons. Iran regretted that the accusations made by the United States might jeopardize the successful

outcome of the Conference. At the same time, Iran urged the United States to put pressure on non-States parties to join the Convention.

TAJOURI SHRADI TAJOURI (Libya), speaking in a right of reply, stated that Libya had no biological weapon programme of any kind. Libya was used to the kind of selective and double standards approach exercised by the United States. Libya cautioned, however, that the Conference should not be used as a platform for making accusations.

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