

(Unofficial translation)

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this crucially important Review Conference.

I have asked to take the floor in order to make a statement on behalf of the Group of Rio, a body for political consultation and coordination comprising Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Venezuela and Guyana, in representation of the Caribbean States.

The Group of Rio made a statement in the general debate in the First Commission of the 56th General Assembly on last October 8th with the purpose of conveying the views of our region on the most important items of the multilateral agenda on International Security and Disarmament.

In that statement, as Member Countries of the Group of Rio we expressed ourselves in the following terms: *"we do regret that no progress has been achieved towards the conclusion of a Protocol on Verification of the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological Weapons and we hope that in the following Review Conference of the Convention the mandate of the "Ad Hoc" Working Group will be reiterated, in order to continue the negotiations for the finalisation of the said international legal instrument"*.

Today we wish to reaffirm these convictions, while insisting on the fact that only the multilateral format will provide a true reinforcement of the Convention that satisfies both the requirements of efficiency and legitimacy, entailed in this exercise.

The terrorist attacks perpetrated against the United States on last September 11th - that have deserved the most vigorous condemnation from our Governments and also our solidarity with the aggressed nation - have brought out the necessity of materialising global actions against international terrorism that enjoy the legitimacy conferred both by their accordance with the U.N. Charter, Humanitarian Law and the International Law of Human Rights and by their implementation within the framework established by that Charter.

Mr. Chairman,

Our countries offer you their full cooperation to make this Review Conference work out.

Thank you.