

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
PERMANENT MISSION AT GENEVA

(Translation, please check against delivery)

Statement by Ambassador SHA Zukang
Head of the Chinese Delegation at the
5th 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

November 19, 2001, Geneva

Mr. President,

It is a great pleasure for the Chinese delegation to have this opportunity to join other delegations in Geneva to review the operation of the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological Weapons and such issues as how to strengthen the effectiveness of the Convention. First of all, please allow me, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, to extend to you our warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. With your rich experience in diplomacy and disarmament and your outstanding skills, I believe you will make valuable contribution to the Conference. Let me assure you of the fullest cooperation on the part of the Chinese delegation in an effort to make our contribution to the success of the Conference.

Mr. President,

Five years ago at the 4th Review Conference, I made a statement right here on behalf of the Chinese delegation in which I elaborated my positions and views of the Chinese government and enumerated the "substantive progress" achieved in the field of arms control and disarmament. I can say it was a statement full of confidence. Today when I come back here to speak again as the head of the Chinese delegation, all sorts of feelings well up in my mind.

In the course of the 5 years, international situation went through complicated and profound changes. On the one hand, enhancing dialogue and cooperation, maintaining world peace, and seeking common development reflect the shared interests and common choice of more and more countries. On the other hand, the two major issues of world peace and development remain unresolved. The world is far from being a peaceful place. Elements of uncertainty are getting increasingly salient in international situation. Democratization of international relations remains to be accomplished. In the field of international arms control and disarmament, the integrity and authority of well-established international disarmament legal system are being undermined. A particular case in point is the ABM Treaty. This instrument of vital importance to international strategic balance and stability is threatened with abandonment. How to maintain and promote disarmament process has become a matter of concern to all countries.

For a while, we consoled ourselves with the fact that, despite all the difficulties encountered in the process of international arms control and

disarmament, considerable progress had been achieved in the negotiations for a protocol for the purpose of strengthening the effectiveness of the Convention. Still, we were let down eventually. Why did it happen? What can we do about it? These are the questions that must be answered at this Review Conference. In the wake of the September 11 event and a series of anthrax contaminations, at a time when the real threat of bio-terrorism looms large, the last thing we should do is to evade these questions. In this sense, the results of this Review Conference will undoubtedly have long-term impact on the effectiveness of the Convention.

Now, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, I would like to make some comments on the general operation of the Convention.

Mr. President,

This Convention is the first international disarmament treaty that bans an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. For more than 20 years, the Convention has played an important role in the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of biological weapons and the prevention of their proliferation. Over the past 5 years, the implementation of the Convention is good on the whole. States parties have by and large complied with the provisions of the Convention and have implemented the measures formulated for this purpose. It must be pointed out, however, that some practices and tendencies shown in the process of implementation deserve our attention.

First, on the standard of implementation. The Chinese delegation has noticed that in the process of fulfilling the obligations under and enhancing the effectiveness of the Convention, a few states parties would more often than not, either wittingly or unwittingly, pose themselves as lecturers. They are always suspicious of the normal scientific research and production activities under the Convention carried out by other states parties in the area of biology, while frequently lecturing others. They remain silent about their own relevant activities and facilities. By way of analogy, this is like a man with a flashlight in hand only to cast light on others while he himself stays in the dark. In the implementation of the Convention, there is only one standard to follow: the provisions of the Convention. It should not and will not be allowed to apply double or multiple standards.

Secondly, on the relationship between the prevention of proliferation and international cooperation. Both the prevention of the proliferation of biological weapons and the promotion of the peaceful use of

biological technology constitute the purposes and objectives of the Convention. They should be complementary and mutually reinforcing. However, we have noted with regret that a minority of countries have gone out of their way to separate the two issues. They focus exclusively on the prevention of proliferation, while adopting a negative attitude towards international cooperation, stubbornly sticking to existing discriminatory practices, and, they went as far as to hampering or undermining international cooperation by using the prevention of proliferation as a pretext. Such practices are detrimental not only to the legitimate rights of states parties, in particular of the developing states parties to engage in exchanges and cooperation, but also to the realization of the objective of the prevention of proliferation.

Thirdly, on the issue of unilateralism vs. multilateralism. At present, when the issue of security is becoming increasingly a cross-cutting and global issue, the interdependence among various countries in this field is augmenting as well as their common grounds. In fact, it is very difficult for a country to ensure its security with its own efforts alone, however powerful it may be. Absolute security for one country is even less achievable. Under such circumstances, the enhancement of international cooperation is the only way to effectively meet the challenges of global security and to realize comprehensive and lasting security. Yet it has been noted again with regret that a certain country, relying on the strength of its enormous economic and military capabilities, often takes a utilitarian and unilateral approach towards efforts in the implementation of obligations and the enhancement of the effectiveness of the Convention. History has proved and will continue to prove that in an interdependent world, the complete prohibition of all biological weapons, the elimination of the threat of biological warfare and the prevention of related proliferation require the participation and efforts of all members of the international community. Unilateralism will never succeed, on the contrary, it will aggravate the problems.

It is the view of the Chinese delegation that the above-mentioned negative tendencies or practices are not conducive to the realization of the purposes and objectives of the Convention and they must be rectified. My delegation will further elaborate on our views and suggestions in future deliberations on specific issues.

Mr. President,

The conclusion of a protocol through negotiations to strengthen the effectiveness of the Convention is the common objective and long-standing aspiration of the international community. We recall that from

the time when we reached the agreement in the early 1990s among states parties to set up an expert group to study relevant issues till the establishment of the Ad Hoc Group to conduct negotiations which resulted in the rolling text of the protocol before us today, we have covered a long and tortuous road. The rolling text has been formulated on the basis of 24 sessions of the Ad Hoc Group and nearly 500 working documents. Various parties have made tremendous efforts, thus demonstrating the political will and determination of the states parties to strengthen the effectiveness of the Convention.

Obviously, on some issues the states parties do have differences of views, some of which will become more evident in the late stages of negotiations. This is actually normal in any negotiations. Differences of views are the precise reason for negotiations and can only be resolved through negotiations. However, at the critical juncture of the common efforts to iron out these differences, the negotiations were suddenly interrupted due to one single state party. The protocol that had great hope of conclusion is facing the threat of being scrapped. This is neither fair nor reasonable. We all remember clearly that this very state party in this very forum once called vociferously on the international community to conclude a protocol as early as possible and even no later than 1998.

Mr. President,

The Chinese delegation has always maintained that the conclusion of a balanced and effective protocol through multilateral negotiations is the only feasible way to comprehensively strengthen the effectiveness of the Convention. We are glad to note that the overwhelming majority of states parties still stand for maintaining the existing mechanism and mandate of the ad hoc group and support continued negotiations within the multilateral framework in order to formulate measures for strengthening the effectiveness of the Convention. My delegation is willing to make joint efforts with the international community to this end. We welcome any proposals made by states parties within the multilateral framework to comprehensively strengthen the Convention. At the same time it is our view that no proposal should only benefit one while impairing the interests of other states parties, nor should it obstruct the applications and international cooperation in the civilian biological field. In fact, the establishment of Ad Hoc Group and its mandate reflected the consensus of all parties after years of hard work.

Mr. President,

The September 11 event showed in a forceful way that terrorism was the

common threat of the international community, seriously threatening world peace and stability. With bio-terrorism already becoming a real threat, one of the most effective ways to combat it is to work within the multilateral framework and conclude through negotiations a reasonable, feasible and effective protocol on the basis of the existing mandate in order to strengthen the effectiveness of the Convention and enhance international cooperation.

Mr. President,

In recent years, the rapid development in bio-technology has made tremendous achievement which brings great opportunities as well as big challenges for mankind. On the one hand, the bio-technology, with unlimited potentials, has already benefited and will continue to benefit mankind. On the other hand, we must not lose sight of the possibility that the mismanagement of the same technology could expose mankind to even greater threat from biological weapons. The Chinese government remains convinced that all scientific and technological development in the biological field should only serve peaceful purposes in the interest of mankind. The issue of how to turn challenges into opportunities should be one of the topics to be considered at this session.

Mr. President,

Once the victim of biological and chemical weapons, China is in favor of the complete prohibition and the thorough destruction of biological and chemical weapons. China firmly opposes the proliferation of these types of weapons, by whatever means, to any country, entity or individual. Based on this very position, the Chinese government attaches great importance to the Convention and has always abided strictly by its provisions in a serious and comprehensive manner. China has never developed, produced, stockpiled, acquired or possessed by any other means biological agents, toxins, related equipment or technologies in contravention of the purposes and objectives of the Convention. China has never encouraged nor enticed any country, group of countries or international organization by any means to produce or acquire the above-mentioned items. China has already instituted a full set of laws and regulations to prevent the non-peaceful use of dual-use biological agents and related technologies.

China has actively participated in those activities on confidence-building measures as agreed upon at previous Review Conferences of the Convention. Since 1988, China has submitted to the United Nations, on an annual basis, information on confidence-building measures since its

accession to the Convention.

China supports the effort to strengthen the effectiveness of the Convention. To this end, China has, since 1991, deeply involved itself in in-depth studies and exploration of possible verification measures within the Ad Hoc Group of Governmental Experts. Since 1995, along with all sides, China has actively and constructively participated in the negotiations on the drafting of the Protocol in the Ad Hoc Group, and has made positive contributions.

Given the importance China attaches to its development and progress in the biological field, China strives to promote international co-operation and exchange with other states parties in the peaceful use of biological technology. The results of these fruitful exchanges have contributed positively to the medical, health and Scientific research work in China and the world. The annex to China's 2001 report on Implementation has set out those exchanges and cooperation in more details.

Mr. President,

China attaches great importance to this session of the Review Conference. It is our hope that the conference will give a fair and objective consideration on the implementation of the Convention for the last five years. We also hope that those unhealthy tendencies and problems which are not conducive to the implementation could be redressed and resolved, and that guidance for future direction would be given to the international community. The Chinese delegation believes that, as States Parties to the Convention, we all share the same goal and objective.

Thank you, Mr. President.

^