

MEXICO

MISION PERMANENTE

16, AVENUE DE BUDE, 1202 GENEVE

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR GUSTAVO ALBIN, HEAD OF
THE MEXICAN DELEGATION, IN THE GENERAL DEBATE OF
THE FIFTH REVIEW CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO
THE CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE
DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCTION AND STOCKPILING OF
BACTERIOLOGICAL (BIOLOGICAL) AND TOXIN WEAPONS
AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Geneva, Switzerland, 20 November, 2001

The preamble of the 1972 BWC clearly establishes the determination of States Parties to bring to an end the arms race in biological and chemical disarmament, including the prohibition and elimination of all types of weapons of mass destruction. It establishes as well their conviction that the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of chemical and bacteriological (biological) weapons and their elimination through effective measures will facilitate the achievement of general and complete disarmament.

We are firmly committed to the fight against new threats to international peace and security. We believe that the community of nations must confront this challenges based on three premises: primacy of the United Nations Organization; strengthening international cooperation for resolving global conflicts; and the establishment of an international order based upon universally observed rules and norms that respond to the needs and aspirations of all countries.

Mr. Chairman, we have effective international cooperation. Giving a concrete expression to this determination is a priority that must not be deferred.

circumstance. Therefore, the 1972 Convention broadens the provisions of the 1925 Protocol and renders obsolete the reservations that had restricted the latter to an instrument of first use prohibition. We encourage the States that have not yet done so to withdraw these reservations.

Mr. Chairman:

Over 10 years ago we began a process to strengthen the biological weapons prohibition regime by endowing it with a verification mechanism through the establishment of the Ad Hoc Group of governmental experts to identify and examine potential verification measures from a scientific and technical standpoint (VEREX).

In 1994 an Ad Hoc Group, open to all States parties was established with the mandate to identify specific measures in the so called "four pillars": definition of terms and objective criteria; incorporation of existing and further confidence building measures and transparency measures; a system of measures to ensure full compliance with the Convention; and specific measures designed to ensure full and effective implementation of Article X.

These four pillars constitute a structure that remains fully valid to strengthen the international regime of prohibition of biological weapons. An overwhelming majority of States parties to the Convention have never developed offensive biological programs. We are convinced that the best way to promote the universality of any instrument of this kind is through the establishment of incentives for scientific and technological development for peaceful purposes. We must recognize that an international disarmament and non-proliferation system that protects us all goes beyond a simple control system.

Mexico regrets that after more than six years of negotiations in which the international community invested a huge amount of effort and resources it was not possible to fulfill the mandate of the Ad Hoc Group of the States parties to the Convention, in other words, the preparation of a verification protocol.

The international community shares the objective of strengthening the Convention. We have before us the opportunity to reiterate the validity and relevance of the mandate of the Ad Hoc Group, the negotiation of a verification mechanism, including the four pillars, and to identify a multilateral course of action that preserves the wealth gathered over six years of work and incorporates measures and recommendations to fight against the new threats facing the international community.

We reiterate our conviction that multilateral negotiations in the framework of the Convention are the most effective way to preserve and strengthen all of the provisions of the Convention.

In this spirit we are open to consider additional measures addressed to the Strengthening of national legislation that penalizes conducts contrary to the provisions of the Convention; to the establishment of security standards on the shipment and use of pathogenic

microorganisms; to the establishment of national oversight systems for genetic engineering and biotechnology; and to the creation of a professional code of conduct to regulate activities within the scope of the Convention.

We appreciate the merits of the proposals of international cooperation for the establishment of effective mechanisms for investigating suspicious outbreaks of disease; the creation of procedures for addressing BWC compliance concerns, as well as international bio-safety standards; and the training of personnel to work in international rapid response teams for possible biological emergencies.

Mr. Chairman;

The Fifth BTWC Review Conference will undertake an objective analysis of the implementation of our Treaty in the last five years in order to determine the level of compliance with its provisions and the goals of its preamble.

This Conference must reiterate our commitment with the responsible use of biotechnology and with the establishment of necessary measures to impede the use of biological and toxin agents with offensive, criminal or terrorist purposes. We call upon the international scientific community to contribute to ensuring that research and development in this area is geared exclusively towards prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes.

Some of our concerns had been already identified in the Final Documents of the previous Review Conferences. Others may be the object of recommendations to be considered by the competent instances of the United Nations system.

From our point of view the most effective methodology for our work is to assess the level of compliance with the provisions of the Convention as well as any other proposal, on an article by article basis, including the provisions of its preamble.

Mr. Chairman:

Our goal must be to review and strengthen the compliance with the regime on the prohibition of biological weapons to protect nations and individuals from the risk of the possible use of weapons of mass destruction. We have several means to accomplish this task, including the need to respect scrupulously with the provisions of the Convention; continue working on the verification regime in which we have invested over six years and which we need to preserve; and the establishment of additional confidence-building and transparency measures.

Thank you.