

PERMANENT MISSION OF NORWAY TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN GENEVA, 35BIS AVENUE DE BUDE, 1202 GENEVA. TEL. +4122 918 04 00

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

STATEMENT BY

H.E. SVERRE BERGH JOHANSEN

AMBASSADOR
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NORWAY
TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE IN GENEVA

Geneva, 20 November 2001

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Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Norwegian delegation I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as chair of this conference. I am confident that we will all benefit from your skillful leadership, and can assure you of our support and cooperation in your efforts to make this a successful meeting.

I would also like to express Norway's strong condemnation of the horrific acts of terrorism against the US on 11 September and to convey our full solidarity with the American people and the US government.

Norway is convinced that close international cooperation and a multilateral approach to non-proliferation and disarmament are essential if we wish to reduce the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction and the terrorist threat to international peace and security. An important part of our response to those who disrupt and destroy should be a new resolve to strengthen the international non-proliferation and disarmament regimes. Universalization and the effective implementation and continued strengthening of these regimes must form an integral part of any future strategy.

The Biological Weapons Convention is a landmark treaty in the international non-proliferation regime. We have noted with satisfaction that, since the last Review Conference, there are several new States Parties to the Convention. We welcome the new Parties, and view this as a step in the right direction towards universalization and an indication of the Treaty's relevance and importance.

Mr. Chairman,

Today's realities underline how urgent it is that all states should work together to strengthen the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention by establishing universal and multilaterally negotiated verification and compliance mechanisms.

Norway has given high priority to the efforts to achieve an effective protocol for strengthening the convention in accordance with the mandate given by the States Parties. For more than six years we have participated

actively in the negotiations in the Ad Hoc Group here in Geneva. We therefore regret the lack of results so far in the form of an agreed Protocol text.

We must, however, concentrate on the tasks ahead and address our challenges in a constructive manner. We therefore welcome new proposals for combating the threat of biological weapons and further strengthening the convention through a multilateral process.

We remain convinced that the Ad Hoc Group must continue its valuable work and carry out the mandate it was given by the states parties. We hope that the States Parties will reconfirm their commitment to the aims set out in this mandate. A multilateral, legally binding instrument is needed now more than ever to fill the existing gap in the non-proliferation regime.

We firmly believe that increased transparency and exchange of information among States Parties is essential to enhance confidence-building. We must strengthen international cooperation on monitoring the situation in this field if we are to combat the threat of the production, transfer and use of biological weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

There is also a clear need to strengthen the support functions of the convention. The convention has been in operation for nearly 30 years, yet it still lacks an organization to support its activities. We need to bring it into line with other international treaties on disarmament and non-proliferation.

We are therefore ready to support proposals to strengthen the framework of the convention with the aim of ensuring more regular meetings of the States Parties and other types of intersessional work. There can be no doubt that the present situation calls for a mechanism and a structure that will enable us to meet and exchange views on the convention more often than every fifth year.

With regard to the more substantive work on strengthening the convention, Norway has noted the proposals in this regard with interest. Without entering into any substantive discussion at this stage, we would like to express support for the proposal to include terrorism and public health in a future legally binding instrument. We believe they are very

important aspects of our fight against the use, or threat of use, of biological weapons.

This said, we believe that a comprehensive, multilaterally negotiated universal agreement that includes a broad range of confidence-building measures, and that strengthens verification and compliance with the convention, represents the best way forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.