

PAKISTAN

Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations, Geneva

Statement

by

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Acting Permanent Representative

at 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

Monday, November 19, 2001

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Mr. President,

1. It gives my delegation immense pleasure to see you in the Chair; heartfelt congratulations on your well-deserved election. Since 1995, you, as Chairman of the BWC Ad Hoc Group, have been guiding our work toward strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention with utmost dedication and diligence. We greatly admire your diplomatic skills. Please be assured of my delegation's continued support and cooperation.

2. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Enrique Roman-Morey on his appointment as the Secretary-General of the Conference.

Mr. President,

3. The world has changed significantly since we had last met at the Fourth Review Conference in 1996. There has been tremendous progress in biosciences, including the completion of the sequencing of the human genome. On the other hand, the September 11th events in the U.S., followed by the continuing anthrax scare, are a grim reminder of our vulnerabilities. Indeed, the goal of achieving viable international security remains ever more distant today than before.

4. But we cannot afford to give up. In fact, ever more vigorous and concerted efforts are required today in order to counter the old and new threats comprehensively and effectively. In our view, the multilateral approach, with full participation of all concerned States, offers the best hope for attaining genuine security at all levels.

5. This Review Conference, therefore, provides us a good opportunity not only to review the operation of the BWC, but also, and more importantly, to deliberate upon strengthening the Convention, as was decided by the Fourth Review Conference. The BWC is an instrument of great significance for the present and future international security. It is, therefore, incumbent upon all of us to make this Conference a success.

Mr. President,

6. Pakistan, as a State Party since 1974, has been fully abiding by all the provisions of the BWC. We never developed, produced, stockpiled or acquired biological weapons, or their means of delivery. In fact, biological weapons had never been a part of our security matrix. At the same time, Pakistan has no reason to doubt other States Parties in respect of the obligations under Article I. We draw considerable satisfaction from the fact that Article VI, relating to violation of the provisions of the Convention, has never been invoked.

7. Like other States Parties, Pakistan also attaches great importance to Article III of the Convention. This article stipulates not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever, directly or indirectly, and not in any way to assist, encourage, or induce any state, group of States or international organisations to manufacture or otherwise acquire any of the agents, toxins, weapons, equipment or means of delivery specified in Article I of the Convention. We fully understand how essential this article is to the effective operation of the overall Convention

8. While Pakistan has always scrupulously adhered to the letter and spirit of Article III, we find it difficult to reconcile with positions that, invoking this article, seek to justify selective implementation of the Convention. Such positions not only create an environment of mistrust, but also raise questions about the very rationale of negotiating and concluding international legally binding instruments.

9. According to Article X, the States Parties undertake to facilitate, and have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the use of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins for peaceful purposes. This also is one of the basic provisions of the Convention and, like all others, needs to be implemented without any prejudice.

10. We cannot agree to an interpretation of Article III that is in any manner at variance with the provisions of Article X. In fact, we do not see any conflict between the two. This Conference must consider the subject of technical and scientific cooperation thoroughly, reaffirming the importance of full implementation of Article X. In this regard, the Chinese proposals, contained in document No. BWC/Ad Hoc Group/WP.453, dated May 8, 2001, provide a good basis for evolving suitable recommendations.

11. Addressing this issue is all the more important now that the Chemical Weapons Convention has also entered into force as envisaged in Article IX of the BWC. These two instruments symbolise our common resolve to establish a world free from weapons of mass destruction. We should ensure their effective operation. And, this can best be done through their full implementation without making them subservient to extraneous and discriminatory arrangements.

12. It must also be stressed that technical and scientific cooperation is important not only for the socio-economic progress of the developing countries, but also fighting infectious diseases and effectively combating the threat of bio-terrorism. These threats recognise no borders. These are our common enemies, and will have to be tackled collectively. In this respect, the U.S. has put forth some interesting proposals, which our delegation is considering with an open mind. We are looking forward to a purposeful discussion on these proposals under the relevant items of the Agenda of this Conference.

Mr. President,

13. Enhancing the effectiveness of the BWC should continue to be the foremost priority for the States Parties. In 1994, the Special Conference of the BWC had established an Ad Hoc Group with a mandate to consider measures, including a legally binding instrument, toward strengthening the Convention. Accordingly, in 1995, the Ad Hoc Group, under your Chairmanship, Mr. President,

year, the Group held its 24111 Session. While significant progress has been made during the last seven years, we are yet to conclude the Protocol. This is sad but not sufficient to lose all hope for a multilateral and equitable solution to the issue of verifying and effectively implementing the BWC.

14. This Conference should take into account the work of the Ad Hoc Group and suggest steps toward fulfilling the 1994 mandate. In our view, the Ad Hoc Group should resume its work with an organisational meeting as soon as possible. We realise that wide differences over some difficult issues continue to exist. But the gaps are not unbridgeable.

15. The States Parties have come a long way from the "Rolling Text" to the Chairman's "Composite Text". We should not underestimate our capabilities to work out solutions acceptable to all. A Spanish proverb says, "There are no roads. Roads are made by walking". We cannot have international instruments, nor other required mechanisms, without substantive negotiations. It is my delegation's sincere hope that this Conference would take the right decision with regard to the Ad Hoc Group, enabling it to wrap up its work on a positive note to the satisfaction of all the States Parties.

Mr. President,

16. The BWC will be more effective if it is universally adhered to. During the last five years, only six more States have joined the BWC bringing the total number of membership to 144. We are thus still far from its universal acceptance. Sovereign States cannot be forced into joining international legal instruments. Ways should be found to encourage countries, which are not yet parties, to come on board the BWC with full conviction and commitment. .

17. Likewise, the States Parties also need to be encouraged to participate fully in the BWC meetings and conferences. Only 77 States Parties attended the Fourth Review Conference. Participation also in the Ad Hoc Group was far from satisfactory. For several States Parties, usually absent, the reason is not the lack of interest or

States Parties, usually absent, the reason is not the lack of interest or commitment on their part, but jejune financial resources. It may be useful for this Conference to look into this aspect. The States Parties who are in a position to extend financial support may do so voluntarily in the long-term interest of the BWC.

Mr. President,

18. Let me conclude by underlining once again that it would be enormously disappointing if this Conference had ended without moving the BWC process forward. A simple review of the operation of the Convention, though an indispensable exercise, cannot suffice. This Conference must also come up with concrete recommendations for strengthening the BWC. New proposals should be welcomed and reflected upon thoroughly. But at the same time, we should not hasten to discard the old ones, which remain relevant, and need to be materialised. As in the past, you will find the delegation of Pakistan participating in the deliberations of this Conference actively and constructively.

Thank you, Mr. President.