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Statement by Ambassador CHUNG Eui-yong, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea, 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, Geneva, 20 November 2001

Mr. President,

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Korea, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Fifth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention. My congratulations also go to other Bureau members on their election and to the Secretary-General of the Conference.

Taking this opportunity, I assure you and members of the bureau of my delegation's full support and cooperation in addressing the important issues this Conference has before it.

Mr. President,

This Review Conference is taking place at a critical juncture when the international community is confronting the new challenges posed by the threat of weapons of mass destruction, as the recent acts of terrorism epitomize.

Five years ago, we, States Parties to the BWC, gathered here against the backdrop of the signing of the CTBT and the imminent entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention; both created an atmosphere conducive to progress in other fields, particularly the BWC.

Consequently, there were high expectations that the BWC Ad Hoc Group, as the single ongoing multilateral disarmament negotiations, would fulfill its mandate by the Fifth Review Conference with a long-awaited report on appropriate measures to strengthen the BWC. However, the AHG has not yet been able to fulfill its mandate, even while last year we marked the 25th anniversary of the entry into force of the BWC and the 75 anniversary of the BWC's precursor, the 1925 Geneva Protocol. Furthermore, as the UN Secretary-General recently reported to the 56th session of the UNGA, the level of international cooperation in disarmament remains disappointingly low.

Mr. President,

Under these circumstances, the September 11th terrorist attacks and ongoing acts of bio-terrorism through the use of anthrax in the United States have served as a wake-up call and brought home the urgency to take effective action against the growing threat of

biological weapons, within and across borders. The anthrax attacks in particular have fueled the fear of sub-state proliferation and biological terrorism, as was already envisaged in the final document of the Fourth Review Conference. Combined with rapid advances and the global spread of knowledge in science and technology relevant to the BWC, the threat of biological weapons is now a clear and present danger.

On the other hand, the global fight against terrorism has underscored the renewed importance of a collective and multilateral approach to threats to international peace and security. We should carry this positive momentum forward in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation, particularly in our efforts to strengthen the BWC.

Mr. President,

The States Parties to the BWC now have an excellent opportunity before them to not only review how the Convention in its entirety has been operating over the last five years, but also to provide guidance and renewed political impetus to strengthen the Convention.

As you, Mr. President, emphasized at the UNGA 1st Committee and again yesterday, the Fifth Review Conference should not just have to consider the work undertaken during the last decade, but also to chart the course for future action that will determine the state of the whole of the biological weapons prohibition regime.

Given such daunting challenges, we cannot afford to be complacent with a business-as-usual approach. In this context, this Conference should explore various ways and means to reinforce and reinvigorate the Convention in a more constructive manner, and come up with a practical outcome, combining the best elements of both existing and new ideas.

In this regard, my delegation is particularly interested in having in-depth discussions on the following:

- 1) How various provisions in the Convention can be further elaborated to strengthen the prohibition regime for biological and toxin weapons through the shared extension of understandings, in view of the many important developments since the last Review Conference, including BWC protocol negotiations;
- 2) How States Parties' activities during the inter-sessional period can be reinvigorated. In this regard, the idea of establishing some kind of inter-sessional mechanism to strengthen the follow-up process deserves serious consideration by State Parties. We know there is no shortage of interesting ideas. My delegation is open-minded about specific modalities.
- 3) How various approaches, both political and legal, to combat the proliferation of biological weapons and bioterrorism can complement and reinforce each other to achieve our common objective, and be carried forward beyond this Review Conference.

Mr. President,

The Republic of Korea has faithfully implemented its obligations and duties under the BWC since its accession to it in 1987. We have never developed, produced, stockpiled, or otherwise acquired or retained any microbial, or other biological agents or toxins for non-peaceful purposes, nor the means for their delivery.

In accordance with Article III and relevant domestic law, the Republic of Korea has not transferred any agents, toxins, weapons, equipment, or means of delivery as specified in Article I of the Convention, to any recipient. In view of the recent acts of bioterrorism, the importance of full adherence to this Article has taken on greater practical meaning.

With regard to Article X, the Republic of Korea has actively participated in international exchanges of scientific and technological information relating to the use of bacteriological agents and toxins for peaceful purposes, and provided assistance to countries in need of health and disease control and education.

An example is the International Vaccine Institute (IVI), an international institution devoted to strengthening the capacity of developing countries in the development, production and use of vaccines in immunization programs. The IVI, headquartered in Seoul, was established in 1997 at the initiative of UNDP, with a view to saving some 9 million children each year in the world, whose deaths could be prevented with timely and appropriate vaccination.

The Republic of Korea has also elaborated comprehensive measures to cope with the new threat posed by bio-terrorism. My Government is in the process of enacting an anti-terrorism law to enhance the effectiveness of its domestic mechanism for combating terrorism. In addition, various measures are being taken to deter potential bio-terrorist acts as part of preparations for such major international events as the 2002 World Cup to be held in Korea and Japan next June.

Mr. President,

As we, States Parties to the BWC, embark on our noble endeavor, we should be both realistic and forward-looking. Given the nature and magnitude of the new challenges, we must take the path of consensus and cooperation, and avoid confrontation.

My delegation looks forward to working towards our shared goals with all States Parties to the Convention and will spare no effort to make this Conference a success.

Thank you.