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Statement of
H.E. Ambassador Virasakdi Futrakul
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand
at the Fifth Review Conference of 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,

At the outset, please allow me to join others before me in congratulating you, Ambassador Toth, on your assumption of the Presidency of the Conference. Your dedication and commitment to the cause of addressing the menace posed by biological weapons is well recognized by all. The Thai Delegation wishes to express our full support to you in the task of guiding the Conference to a successful conclusion. Our congratulations are also extended to other members of the Bureau.

Mr. President,

We are gathered here in the shadow of the tragedy of the globalization of terrorism that exploded on September 11, 2001, and the subsequent acts of bio-terrorism. We share the grief of the American people and empathize with the United States' concern underlying its proposal for innovative measures to cope with the threats of biological weapons. These events have underlined the importance of the BWC as an instrument to safeguard international peace and security and to prevent the exploitation of biotechnological advances for non-peaceful purposes. Thailand is therefore willing to consider the United States' proposal as well as any other proposals to strengthen the BWC and to create transparent and impartial international mechanisms to further the implementation of this important instrument.

Mr. President,

The recent events also serve to reinforce Thailand's conviction that there is still an urgent need to strengthen the implementation of the Convention with the legally binding instrument. We regret therefore

that negotiations in the Ad Hoc Group (AHG) on a Protocol to the BWC, as mandated by the decision of the Special Conference in 1994 and the Fourth Review Conference in 1996, have not reached a successful conclusion. We do hope that this Conference would be able to find ways for States Parties to continue our common unfinished work towards ensuring effective verification and compliance, and hence strengthen implementation of the Convention. In this regard, we would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to you, Mr. President, for your untiring efforts during the past years in your capacity as the Chairman of the AHG.

At the same time, while we should give due importance to promoting compliance, the Conference should also not neglect the concerns of developing countries in securing adequate technical cooperation to promote peaceful uses of biotechnology, such as for public health and agricultural purposes. These elements should be given adequate attention in our discussions here.

Mr. President,

For our part, Thailand has always solemnly adhered to our commitments under the BWC. We have not developed, used, produced, acquired or stockpiled any bacteriological, biological or toxin weapons, nor do we have any policy to do so in the future.

The Thailand Biodiversity Center (TBC), under the Ministry of Science and Technology, has been appointed as the provisional national focal point for the BWC. An inter-agency working group, with TBC as its secretariat, has been established, while preparations are under way to ensure the effective functioning of a permanent national focal point for all matters related to the Convention. However, even though TBC is still only a provisional focal point, it has already carried out many useful tasks in promoting the objectives of the BWC and ensuring compliance. For example, TBC has undertaken information dissemination on the BWC to various government agencies concerned, as well as to the general public. It has launched vital data collection activities and has proceeded with translation works to prepare Thailand's detailed Data Declaration, using the draft forms proposed by the Chairman of the AHG.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, Thailand remains fully committed to the BWC, and is prepared to be fully engaged in the next stage of discussions, whatever form that may take.

I thank you, Mr. President.
