

SIXTH REVIEW CONFERENCE ON BIOWEAPONS CONVENTION
CONCLUDES SESSION NEGOTIATED FINAL DECLARATION PROVES
MULTILATERALISM CAN WORK IN DISARMAMENT AFFAIRS

8 December 2006

The Sixth 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 has concluded its three-week session, adopting a final declaration on the various articles of the Convention, and a series of decisions and recommendations on various issues, including the creation of an Implementation Support Unit, an intersessional work programme for 2007-2010, Confidence-Building Measures, and the promotion of universalization.

In concluding remarks, the President of the Sixth Review Conference said it was a historic moment, both for the Biological Weapons Convention and for multilateral security and disarmament. It had been unequivocally reaffirmed that the Convention applied to all relevant scientific and technological developments, and effectively prohibited the *use* of biological weapons. The need for effective national implementation of the Convention, and for measures to promote the development of the peaceful uses of biological agents and toxins had been re-emphasized, and a specific and detailed plan to promote universal adherence to the Convention had been adopted. A full and comprehensive intersessional programme had been adopted for 2007 to 2010. Perhaps most historically of all, there had been the agreement to establish an Implementation Support Unit to assist in implementing the decisions of this Conference.

In his opening address to the Review Conference, on 20 November, Secretary-General Kofi Annan observed that now was the time to take further steps to ensure that the Convention would continue to serve as an effective barrier against biological weapons. Today, a strong focus on preventing terrorism, as well as renewed concern about naturally occurring diseases such as SARS and avian flu, had transformed the environment in which the Convention operated, and altered ideas about its role and potential.

Speaking this afternoon were representatives of Iran, Finland for the European Union, the Russian Federation, Switzerland (on behalf of the JACKSNNZ group), Japan, India, Cuba (on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement), Brazil (on behalf of the Group of Latin American countries), United States of America, Australia (on behalf of the Western Group), the Netherlands, Hungary (on behalf of the Eastern and Central European Group), and Algeria.

Declaration

In a final declaration, which was orally amended during the meeting, the Conference declared that the Convention was comprehensive in its scope and that all naturally or artificially created or altered microbial or other biological agents and toxins, as well as their components, regardless of their origin or method of production and whether they affected humans, animals or plants, of types and in quantities that had no justification for prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes were unequivocally covered by the Convention. All States parties should ensure that

biological agents and toxins relevant to the Convention were protected and safeguarded, including through measures to control access to and handling of such agents and toxins. States parties were encouraged to take necessary measures to promote awareness amongst relevant professionals of the need to report activities conducted within their territory or under their jurisdiction or under their control that could constitute a violation of the Convention or related national criminal law. All States parties should deal effectively with compliance issues.

The Conference appealed to all States parties to the 1925 Geneva Protocol to fulfil their obligations assumed under that Protocol and urged all States not yet parties to the Protocol to ratify or accede to it without delay. It recalled that States Parties had the legal obligation 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 and not to hamper the economic and technological development of States Parties. It noted that Iran had formally presented a proposal to amend Article I and the title of the Convention to include explicitly the prohibition of the use of biological weapons. The Conference also reaffirmed that the Convention was of unlimited duration and applied at all times, and expressed satisfaction that no State party had exercised its right to withdraw from the Convention.

Decisions and Recommendations

In decisions and recommendations, the Conference:

- on Work of the 2003-2005 Meetings of State Parties, endorsed the consensus outcome documents from the Meeting of States Parties.
- on the Implementation Support Unit, decided that an Implementation Support Unit would be established and would consist of three full-time staff members, to provide administrative support and confidence-building measures.
- on the Intersessional Programme 2007-2010, decided to hold four annual meetings of the States parties of one week duration each year, commencing in 2007 to discuss and promote common understanding and effective action.
- on Confidence-Building Measures, decided that the Implementation Support Unit should develop an electronic format of the existing confidence-building measures forms, and centralize requests and offers of assistance regarding the submission of these by States parties.
- on promotion of universalisation, agreed that a concerted effort by States parties was needed to persuade States not Parties to join the Convention.

Further information on the results of the session are available on the [website](http://www.unog.ch) of the United Nations Office at Geneva (www.unog.ch).

The States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention are next scheduled to meet from 10 to 14 December 2007.

Concluding Statement by the President of the Conference

MASOOD KHAN, President of the Sixth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention, in concluding remarks, said it was a historic moment, both for the Biological Weapons Convention and for multilateral security and disarmament. The Convention was more important than ever. One hundred and three States Parties participated in the Conference, and the Convention was clearly important to these States Parties, as it was to the record number of 33 non-governmental organizations who attended. The interest and engagement of civil society had never been greater in what must be a shared struggle against the threat of biological weapons.

It had been unequivocally reaffirmed that the Convention applied to all relevant scientific and technological developments, and effectively prohibited the *use* of biological weapons. The need for effective national implementation of the Convention, and for measures to promote the development of the peaceful uses of biological agents and toxins had been re-emphasised, and a specific and detailed plan to promote universal adherence to the Convention had been adopted.

The procedures for the submission and distribution of the Confidence-Building Measures had been streamlined and updated, and practical steps taken to increase the level of participation. A full and comprehensive intersessional programme had been adopted for 2007 to 2010, where the important topics of national implementation, regional cooperation, biosafety and biosecurity, oversight and awareness-raising, enhancement of international cooperation and exchange in biological science and technology, and assistance in the case of alleged use of biological weapons would be addressed.

Perhaps most historically of all, there had been the agreement to establish an Implementation Support Unit to assist in implementing the decisions of this Conference. For many years, the States Parties have debated the need for institutional support for the Convention, and now this existed, based the positive and practical contribution the temporary secretariat had made over the past three years. This was multilateralism as it should be: flexible, responsive, creative and dynamic; and above all, focused on overcoming obstacles and delivering results.

Concluding Statements by Delegations

M. HAMID BAEIDI NEJAD (Iran), said it was an honour to join in the joy of celebrating the final conclusion of the Conference, the success of which would not have been possible without the tremendous efforts of the President, and the necessary compromises of delegations in order to achieve the Conference's objectives. Iran had traditional reservations that reference to Israel in the final document did not represent any recognition of the Israeli regime.

M. KARI KAHILUOTO (Finland), in a closing statement on behalf of the European Union, said that the Review Conference had once again reaffirmed the norm that biological weapons were totally prohibited, and it had made an important contribution to the further strengthening of the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention. They had also reaffirmed that the use, in any way and under any

circumstances, of biological agents or toxins, that was not consistent with peaceful purposes, was effectively a violation of Article I of the Convention. Their common commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation of biological and toxin weapons was the necessary foundation from which they could exploit the potential of biosciences for peaceful purposes.

The European Union welcomed the final declaration of the Conference, which broadly met the objectives they had set for it. They all now had the responsibility of the prompt, concrete and effective implementation of the decisions contained in the final document, on national, regional and international level. The European Union considered comprehensive implementation and universalization of the Convention to be areas of priority. The Conference had agreed on helpful tools in ensuring full implementation and universalization of the Convention. Their utilization in concrete terms should start expeditiously and therefore the European Union encouraged States Parties to designate national focal points and contact points for the different activities as soon as possible.

M. ANATOLIY ANTONOV (Russian Federation) said today the Conference was completing three weeks of work to review one of the key international agreements in disarmament and non-proliferation. A lot of useful work had been done: the final declaration had been adopted, reflecting the role and importance of the Convention in the modern world, and the way to strengthen it. The document was substantive and balanced, and consistent with the interests of all States. Multilateral efforts in disarmament and non-proliferation had been shown to be productive, strengthening strategic stability. What was required now was joint action.

There was satisfaction on the negotiations: all negotiations had worked to achieve mutually acceptable decisions, in a respectful and constructive manner. The discussions on universality and on compliance at the national level had been useful. A lot had been done, but a lot remained to be done to prevent dangerous materials from finding their way into the hands of terrorists. The year was being concluded on a positive note, and this was optimistic with regards to disarmament and non-proliferation in the future. This should have a positive effect on the Conference on Disarmament.

M. JÜRIG STREULI (Switzerland), speaking on behalf of the JACKSNNZ (Japan, Australia, Canada, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Norway and New Zealand), said that they had been working for months with the overarching objective of enhancing the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention over practical measures to be adopted. They had worked in a constructive manner, and had carried out a full article-by-article review of the Convention. They welcomed the setting up of the Implementation Support Unit to assist us in implementing the decisions of this Conference.

They regretted, though, that they had not reached agreement on the realization of a national plan of action. All States Parties should adopt the necessary measures and realize commitments made at this Review Conference, and preserve the positive spirit that had characterized the Sixth Review Conference to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. They highly commended the work of the President of the Convention.

M. YOSHIKI MINE (Japan) said that Japan was firmly committed, and all States parties should engage in accomplishing their responsibilities on national and international levels to accomplish the objectives of the Convention.

M. JAYANT PRASAD (India) said the outcome of the Conference was very satisfying. The year was ending on a high note for the disarmament community. Consensus had been reached on a comprehensive declaration, encapsulating key understandings, covering all articles of the Convention. Agreements had been made on measures promoting universal adherence to the Convention, and measures agreed on wider participation of States parties on confidence-building measures. The agreement on the intersessional process would contribute to strengthening the Convention and its full implementation. It was regretted that the inability to reach consensus on an action plan for the comprehensive implementation of the Convention had taken place, but it was hoped this would be a spur for success in the future. The flexibility of all delegations was appreciated, and it was hoped that the same spirit would guide the future work.

MME ANAYANSI RODRÍGUEZ CAMEJO (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, expressed their profound gratitude for the great skills of the President of the Review Conference in developing consensus. They were convinced that his excellent leadership had been key to the success of this Conference.

The success of the Review Conference had sent a strong signal that States Parties were fully committed to the realization of the Biological Weapons Convention. The Review Conference, which was possible in a spirit of cooperation, proved that it was possible to move ahead in disarmament issues in a multilateral framework.

M. GUSTAVO SENECHAL (Brazil) on behalf of the Group of Latin American Countries, said the issues that had been dealt with were complex and multifaceted, and related to the top agendas of science and technology research. The concrete outcomes would strengthen the biological weapons regime, and that was not a small achievement. The Conference was a clear political statement that past setbacks should not be a discouragement – the past three weeks had proved that multilateralism worked and could be effective. The Conference had been a success.

MME CHRITINA ROCCA (United States) said that the final document was a source of pride for all States Parties. They all made great attempts and efforts during the last three weeks, and in no small part the success of this Conference was the result of the unseen hand of its President.

M. CRAIG MACLACHLAN (Australia) on behalf of the Western Group, said the efforts of the President in preparing for the meeting had been appreciated. The meeting had set a fast pace, which had led to a successful conclusion.

M. JOHANNES C. LANDMAN (Netherlands) said that the success of the Review Conference was due to a great extent to the expertise and neutrality of the President of the Conference. They also commended the professionalism and flexibility of the Non-Aligned Movement, in particular Cuba.

M. BALÁZS RÁTKAI (Hungary), on behalf of the Eastern and Central European Group, announced that coordinatorship of the Group would be passed to Slovakia from 1 January 2007, and it would be in good hands.

M. HAMZA KHELIF (Algeria) said that the success achieved at the Sixth Review Conference to the Biological Weapons Convention was shared by all States Parties. Algeria congratulated the President of the Conference on the work he had carried out. Algeria was positive and optimistic, and hoped that the next conference would deal with the work that had not been completed during the current Review Conference.

Membership and Officers

There are 155 States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, more formally referred to as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, with a further 16 states having signed but not yet ratified.

Elections for posts were held at the opening session of the Conference. Ambassador Masood Khan (Pakistan), was elected President by acclamation. Tim Caughley (Australia; Director, UNDDA Geneva Branch) was Secretary-General. The Conference's 20 Vice-Presidents were: Austria, Belarus, Chile, China, Finland, Germany, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Russian Federation, Slovakia, South Africa, Turkey, and Ukraine. The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole was Doru Costea (Romania), with Boometswe Mokgothu (Botswana) and Paul Meyer (Canada) serving as Vice-Chairmen. The Drafting Committee was led by Chairman Knut Langeland (Norway), with Vladimir Bundin (Russian Federation), and Pedro Luiz Dalcero (Brazil), as Vice-Chairmen. Finally, the Credentials Committee was chaired by Philip Richard Owade (Kenya), with Jurg Streuli (Switzerland) as Vice-Chairman.

For use of the information media; not an official record

DC06070E