

## SIXTH REVIEW CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION OPENS

UN Secretary-General Urges Conference to Take Further Steps to Ensure that Convention will Continue to Serve as an Effective Barrier against Biological Weapons

20 November 2006

The Sixth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention opened this morning, hearing United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan urge States parties to take further steps to ensure that the Convention continues to serve as an effective barrier against biological weapons.

The Secretary-General said that over the past four years, States parties had created, developed and carried out an innovative work programme. This programme had made a modest but practical contribution to the implementation of the Convention, and had reduced the risk of biological weapons being developed, acquired or used. Now was the time to build on these results, and take further steps to ensure that the Convention would continue to serve as an effective barrier against biological weapons.

Nobuaki Tanaka, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, in opening remarks, said the Biological Weapons Convention was the legal embodiment of the international community's determination to exclude forever the possibility of disease being used as a weapon. As such, it formed one of the three fundamental pillars of the collective struggle against weapons of mass destruction. It was a treaty crucial to security, and this Conference was crucial to the treaty.

Masood Khan of Pakistan, who was elected President of the Conference by acclamation, said there was no room for complacency as biological weapons were a real, potent threat to humanity, not a figment of the imagination. They were weapons of mass destruction that might be as deadly as nuclear weapons, and even deadlier. This conference was a vital opportunity to take action against a threat that was too serious to ignore. Thanks to the energy, resourcefulness and commitment of the States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention over the past months, the time was ripe for success.

Tim Caughley, Director of the Geneva Branch of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, was elected as Secretary-General of the Conference by acclamation and seventeen Vice-Presidents, with three nominations to still be made, were elected. The Conference also elected the Chairmen of the respective committees: for the Committee of the whole, Doru Costea of Romania; for the Drafting Committee, Knut Langeland of Norway; and for the Credentials Committee, Naria Nzomo of Kenya. The Conference also adopted the agenda, took note of the Report of the Preparatory Committee, adopted the rules of procedure as recommended by the Preparatory Committee, agreed on the participation of observer States, specialised agencies and international organizations, and adopted the programme of work.

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, opened for signature in 1972 and entered into force in 1975. The BWC is the first multilateral disarmament

treaty banning an entire category of weapons. It currently has 155 States Parties, with a further 16 states having signed but not yet ratified. BWC review conferences are held every five years to ensure that the purposes and provisions of the Convention - prohibiting the development, production and stockpiling of biological and toxin weapons - are being realised.

After the opening statements and the Secretary-General's address, the Conference started its general debate, hearing from representatives of Finland, on behalf of the European Union, Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States, Argentina on behalf of twelve Latin American States, Canada on behalf of Japan, Australia, Canada, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Norway and New Zealand, United States, Germany, Indonesia, Switzerland, Japan, Malaysia, Australia, United Kingdom, Russian Federation, Republic of Korea, Algeria, and Canada.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be at 3 p.m. this afternoon when it will continue its general debate.

### **Opening Statements**

NOBUAKI TANAKA, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, said the Biological Weapons Convention was the legal embodiment of the international community's determination to exclude forever the possibility of disease being used as a weapon. As such, it formed one of the three fundamental pillars of the collective struggle against weapons of mass destruction. It was a treaty crucial to security, and this Conference was crucial to the treaty. The States parties had three short weeks in which to review all aspects of the operation of the Convention, and to decide on what should be done to maintain and strengthen its effectiveness, and thus reduce the risk of biological agents and toxins being used as weapons. It was an important and challenging task, and there was no time to waste.

MASOOD KHAN (Pakistan), President of the Sixth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention, said that today was a special day and a momentous occasion. This Conference was the launching pad for their campaign against biological warfare. This Conference was where they confronted the threat of biological weapons, and where they must discharge their responsibility to ensure that disease was never used as a weapon. Thirty-one years ago, the original signatories to the Biological Weapons Convention decided that biological weapons would never be produced or used. They resolved that biological agents and toxins would be used only for peaceful purposes. Today, 155 States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention could look back with satisfaction and say that this Convention had been an effective barrier against the use of disease as a weapon. Stockpiles had been destroyed, the incidence of biological weapons had been low, and no country - States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention or not - would dare contend that biological weapons could ever had a legitimate place in national defence. But there was no room for complacency. Biological weapons were a real, potent threat to humanity, not a figment of the imagination. They were weapons of mass destruction that might be as deadly as nuclear weapons, and even deadlier.

The extraordinary breakthroughs in the biosciences promised better medicines, better

crops, and a better environment. But the perfectly legitimate development of new vaccines, or treatments for Alzheimer's and diabetes, had also revealed a more sinister potential for malign use. The challenge would only become greater with synthetic biology witnessing exponential growth, and biotechnology finding widespread commercial applications around the world. They needed a range of measures to meet these challenges. But no attempt should be made to smother scientific inquiry or to restrict the growth of the biotechnology industry. Their sole purpose should be to ensure that the peaceful applications of science and technology could be developed in safety. This conference was a vital opportunity to take action against a threat that was too serious to ignore. Thanks to the energy, resourcefulness and commitment of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention over the past months, the time was ripe for success. At this Conference, they would look at the implementation of each article of the Convention, build on the work of the past four years, and take decisions on strategy and activities beyond 2006.

### **Secretary-General's Statement**

KOFI ANNAN, Secretary-General of the United Nations, addressing the Convention, said five years ago, the Convention faced the dire prospect of stalemate and deadlock, and when it came to strengthening the Convention through a protocol, years of negotiations had failed to achieve a consensus. Deep and bitter divisions threatened to bring collective efforts against biological weapons to a permanent halt. Yet, because of the commitment and resourcefulness of the States parties, history took a different path. Over the past four years, they had created, developed and carried out an innovative work programme, drawing on the knowledge and experience of legal, scientific, security, public health and law enforcement experts from around the world. This programme had made a modest but practical contribution to the implementation of the Convention, and had reduced the risk of biological weapons being developed, acquired or used.

In particular, national implementation of the Convention had been improved, and the security of dangerous pathogens had been tightened. National and international capacities for disease surveillance were being strengthened. All States parties could take credit for this achievement. All had made compromises; many had deferred their ambitions, and some had had reservations. But all had demonstrated real commitment and turned an interim measure into a remarkable success. This was multilateralism as it should be: flexible, responsive, creative and dynamic, and, above all, focussed on overcoming obstacles and delivering results. Now was the time to build on these results, and take further steps to ensure that the Convention would continue to serve as an effective barrier against biological weapons.

In the five years since the last review Conference, global circumstances had changed and risks had evolved. Today there was a strong focus on preventing terrorism, as well as renewed concern about naturally occurring diseases such as SARS and avian flu. These developments had transformed the environment in which the Convention operated, and altered ideas about its role and potential. These changes meant that the Convention could no longer be viewed in isolation, as simply a treaty prohibiting States from obtaining biological weapons. Rather, it should be looked at as part of an interlinked array of tools, designed to deal with an interlinked array of problems. And that meant stitching these strands into a coherent strategy. In recent months, Mr.

Annan said he had raised the idea of a forum that would bring together the various stakeholders in an effort to ensure that biotechnology's advances continued to be used for the benefit of humanity while the risks were managed.

This review conference could make a major contribution to that effort. Treaties were an essential part of the multilateral system, and could be strengthened by building bridges to different fields. This would also ensure that actions were complementary and mutually reinforcing. Furthermore, building public health capacities could strengthen safeguards against bio-terrorism. The efforts over the past four years had put all in a good position to make further progress. Differences would remain. But States parties should find, once again, creative and resourceful ways around them. Far more united them than divided them, and the horror of biological weapons was shared by all. As the Convention stated, their use would be "repugnant to the conscience of mankind", and Mr. Annan urged States parties to seize the opportunity presented by the Conference, reminding them that the United Nations would continue to support them.

### **General Debate**

MARKUS LYRA (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that one did not need to be trained in biology to be convinced of the importance of biological sciences and biotechnology in today's world. It sometimes felt that not a day went by without a new discovery and, perhaps, more importantly, new practical applications in this field that contributed to global economic and social development. The potential for progress was enormous and they should harness it to the maximum, but no States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention should lose sight of the principal obligations under this Convention: disarmament and non-proliferation of biological and toxin weapons.

Their commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation of biological and toxin weapons was a necessary foundation from which they could exploit the potential of biosciences for peaceful purposes. That required them to manage the risks associated with the inherent dual use nature of biological agents and toxins, materials, equipment, and knowledge under this Convention. The management of those risks in the complex world of today required a multifaceted approach. The strengthening of the multilateral regime must be linked with other kinds of governmental and non-governmental, national and international measures. In this context, the Biological Weapons Convention remained the internationally recognized normative and legal cornerstone of biological disarmament and non-proliferation. Its Review Conferences were the forum for taking decisions to strengthen this "cornerstone," both the Convention itself and its implementation. They should use this opportunity to reaffirm the norm that biological weapons were totally prohibited and to strengthen the effectiveness of the Convention.

The European Union strongly supported a further intersessional work programme, leading to the Seventh Review Conference in 2011. The new programme should not merely repeat the 2003-05 discussions but build on them, extend them where this made sense while drawing on the lessons they had learned. The European Union supported a focus on practical and feasible measures that would strengthen the Convention by enhancing the effectiveness of its implementation.

JUAN ANTONIO FERNANDEZ PALACIOS (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States, said the Non-Aligned Group came to the meeting ready to discuss any issue related to the implementation of the Convention, as well as its current and future development. The Non-Aligned Group wished to reiterate its deep concern about the potential use and/or threats of use of biological agents and toxins as an instrument of war and terror, and, in this regard, felt that there was a greater necessity and urgency for the States parties of the Convention to work towards strengthening and improving the effectiveness and implementation of the Convention so that this concern could be fully addressed. The only sustainable method of strengthening the Convention was through multilateral negotiations aimed at concluding a non-discriminatory, legally binding agreement, dealing with all the articles of the Convention in a balanced and comprehensive manner.

The Conference, as the first disarmament multilateral treaty banning a whole category of weapons of mass destruction, constituted an impressive expression of international cooperation and multilateral negotiations in response to the challenges facing humankind. The universal adherence to and further strengthening of the Convention would make a significant contribution to advancing further in the field of arms regulation, non-proliferation and disarmament on the basis of universal, multilateral, non-discriminatory and transparent negotiations with the goal of reaching general and complete disarmament under strict international control. The general thrust of the Conference should be directed to the review of the operation and implementation of all the Articles of the Convention and its preamble, and should also consider future measures to further strengthen the effectiveness and improve the implementation of the Convention.

MARCELO VALLE FONROUGE (Argentina), speaking on behalf of a number of twelve Latin American States, said that in accordance with the commitment expressed during the Preparatory Meeting, they had submitted five working documents to contribute to strengthening the Convention, in particular its universality, follow-up mechanisms, confidence-building measures, scientific cooperation and transfer of technology (Article X), and Support Unit. With reference to universality, they called upon all States to withdraw reservations to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, and adopt a plan of action to facilitate other States joining the Biological Weapons Convention, including the commitment of all States Parties to intensify their efforts in the bilateral as well as in the regional and multilateral meetings framework, and sharing of legislative experiences.

With reference to confidence-building measures, they proposed improving their applications and studying the elaboration of standardized formats to facilitate their fulfilment and easy reading. On scientific cooperation and technology transfer, they underscored the importance of ensuring their effectiveness on peaceful activities, such as those related to public health, and agriculture. They also suggested setting up a Support Unit to facilitate the work of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, and assist them in complying with their obligations to the Convention, in particular with reference to their national legislations and submission of their yearly reports.

PAUL MEYER (Canada), speaking on behalf of Japan, Australia, Canada, Republic

of Korea, Switzerland, Norway and New Zealand, said they formed an informal group of countries which shared similar views on issues related to biological weapons and implementation of the Convention, and had been working together to share ideas, information, and approaches to the various issues that would be addressed at the Conference. In this regard, a series of national papers had been prepared to inform the deliberations at the Conference. These included universalisation, confidence-building measures, a support unit for the Conference, national implementation, and the intersessional process, and these papers had been drafted and presented on a national basis, in consultation with each other. The countries were committed to contributing to a successful outcome at the Conference that strengthened the Convention and addressed the new challenges and opportunities in science and technology.

JOHN C. ROOD (United States) said the United States believed that the Biological Weapons Convention today was strong. The United States reaffirmed its commitment to the Convention and underscored that it continued to serve as an important international norm against the use of biology as a weapon. Yet the world was a very different place today than in 1972. During the Cold War, countries were concerned mostly about state-run programmes. Now they also must recognize the grim prospect of terrorist organizations using biology as a weapon of terror and mass destruction, and they must gird themselves to respond to new and evolving threats.

When States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention gathered at the resumed Fifth Review Conference in November 2002, the international effort to combat the biological weapons threat took a pragmatic and measurable step forward. States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention recognized the necessity of a three-pronged strategy of national, bilateral and multilateral measures and unanimously adopted a tailored programme of work to confront the biological weapons threat in today's strategic environment - in which threats come from rogue states and terrorists. It was with these threats in mind that they must continue to strengthen their efforts and adapt their non-proliferation and counter-proliferation tools to stop the development and transfer of biological weapons.

The United States believed that the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention could and should build upon the constructive Work Programme of 2003-2005 and further strengthen implementation of the Convention. Non-compliance with the fundamental requirement not to develop biological weapons was of paramount concern. It would be irresponsible to strengthen the superstructure of the Convention and yet turn a blind eye to problems with the foundation itself. The United States had concerns with the actions of a number of States and it publicly detailed its compliance concerns in an annual report to the U.S. Congress. The activities of North Korea, Iran, and Syria were of particular concern given their support for terrorism and lack of compliance with their international obligations. Each of these countries was identified in the most recent edition of the United States non-compliance report published in August 2005. The United States understood that the problem of non-compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention was difficult but it must be faced head-on. The international community must always remain vigilant and steadfast, and root out violators that undermined the integrity of the Convention.

FRIEDRICH GRÖNING (Germany) said the Conference was an important and timely opportunity to revisit and reaffirm the Convention in its totality, after the last

complete review in 1996. Keeping in mind the insufficient outcome of the other arms control/disarmament treaty conferences in the recent part, the international community should not be disappointed again by leaving Geneva without having agreed on substantive issues to strengthen the Convention. The final document of the Conference should allow States parties to continue with a result-oriented intersessional process which could build on some elements already discussed in the follow-up process. National implementation of the Convention was a pivotal point for its success.

The Fourth Review Conference in 1996 had acknowledged that not only the development, production and stockpiling of biological weapons but also their use was prohibited under the Convention. The United Nations Secretary-General's mechanism for investigating cases of alleged use of biological or toxin weapons represented an international institutional mechanism for investigating cases of alleged use of biological or toxin weapons. However, the technical guidelines and procedures to guide the Secretary-General in carrying out timely and efficient investigations of alleged use of chemical and biological weapons had not been updated since 1989. Given the rapid progress in biotechnology and the advances in investigation techniques, the mechanism was unlikely to conform to current technological standards.

I GUSTI AGUNG WESAKA PUJA (Indonesia) said the Convention could only be strengthened by the adoption of a Protocol. Biological weapons were a common threat to all countries and they recognized no boundaries. Indonesia called upon countries not yet parties to the Convention to join it. It supported capacity building and the peaceful uses of biotechnology to public health. As part of the efforts to strengthen bilateral cooperation, Indonesia had been working closely together with Australia. Indonesia hoped that the Sixth Review Conference on the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and Their Destruction would not only assess the efficiency of the Convention but also tackle the question of how to implement the Convention.

JÜRIG STREULI (Switzerland) said the Convention on Biological Weapons was, with the Geneva Protocol of 1925, the central pillar of the international regime on biological weapons. This Convention was by far the best framework in which to coordinate efforts to face deliberate biological threats, whether this be by States or by other groups. The use of biological weapons, formally forbidden by the Geneva Protocol and implicitly by the Convention, not only was against these instruments, but would also be a grave violation of humanitarian principles. The final report of the Convention should underline this fact clearly and firmly, and should also reflect the substance of the deliberations of the Conference, and should be a starting point for increased activity by States in the process of strengthening the Convention.

After ten years without a final declaration, it was essential that the Convention should not only re-affirm the norm relating to the prohibition of biological weapons and the strengthening of this norm, but that it should be adapted to take account of present and future biological threats, notably by ensuring implementation at the national level. The drafting of an additional, legally binding protocol for the verification of the provisions of the Convention should remain the Conference's goal. At the moment,

the basic conditions for the re-launch of negotiations on this subject had not been fulfilled. Switzerland had drafted a working document designed to improve and to strengthen confidence-building measures, and was convinced that, in the absence of other verification mechanisms, priority should be given to these measures both in the present review conference and in the framework of the follow-up and the process between 2007 and 2011.

YOSHIKI MINE (Japan) said that as the only international legal norm that comprehensively prohibited biological and toxic weapons, the Biological Weapons Convention was one of the important pillars of the weapons of mass destruction disarmament and non-proliferation framework. Thus its Review Conferences were an important opportunity to assess the operation of the Convention; nonetheless, ten years had elapsed since the Fourth Biological Weapons Convention Review Conference, when the last comprehensive article-by-article review was agreed to. In that period, the anthrax attacks took place in the United States and bio-terrorism appeared to be a realistic threat. Moreover, the occurrence of pandemics such as SARS, the dramatic advancement in life sciences and the rapid global growth of the bio-industry had brought about new challenges for the Biological Weapons Convention.

Under these circumstances, Japan believed that it was crucial that in realizing the fundamental aim of the Biological Weapons Convention—the complete ban of biological and toxic weapons - each State Party, with its own capabilities had to diligently execute its responsibilities under the Convention. To be more precise, internally, in addition to the enactment of legislation to implement the prohibitions of the Biological Weapons Convention, security and oversight of pathogenic microorganisms and toxins; strengthening preventive and response capabilities, such as infectious disease surveillance and detection; and measures to raise public awareness, including codes of conduct for scientists were essential. Externally, strengthening export controls was also necessary.

Regrettably, sufficient mutual support had not been generated among the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention with regard to the implementation of their obligations not to develop or acquire biological or toxic weapons. Therefore, casting off this mutual mistrust and improving security of the States parties was important, and specifically, strengthening confidence-building measures was necessary.

MUHAMMAD SHAHRUL IKRAM YAAKOB (Malaysia) said it had been five years since the last Conference was held. During that period, a lot of development had taken place. There had been tremendous progress in bio-sciences, and at the same time, concerns had been raised about the misuse of the knowledge therein. Concerns had also been raised about bio-terrorism. There were continued fears of the possibility of individuals or groups getting their hands on biological or toxin weapons and using them to terrorise societies. The Conference should rightly serve to take care of concerns, allay fears, and reduce nightmares, as it was a timely opportunity to review not only its operation, but also deliberate strengthening the Convention. The Conference should reaffirm, and, where necessary, expand the understanding of the core objectives, principles and goals of the Convention, taking into account developments that had taken place in the international security environment, as well

as in the respective scientific fields relevant to the Convention.

There was a clear need to strengthen the support functions of the Convention. There should also be a provision that provided for the convening of an annual meeting of States parties during the inter-sessional period. There should also be further improvement of the confidence-building measures with a view to enhance submission of national reports. The submission of confidence-building measures would enable States parties to demonstrate their compliance in an open, systematic and continuous manner. This would help create a more positive atmosphere for future cooperation among States parties. The Conference should consider and agree on an incremental process that would be geared towards the establishment of a verification and compliance mechanism. Further, the reaffirmation of the determination that the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of toxin and biological weapons and their elimination, through effective measures, was a priority should not be deferred by the Conference.

CAROLINE MILLAR (Australia) said that in the current challenging environment, the Biological Weapons Convention faced unprecedented challenges. It was therefore imperative that this Conference strengthened the Biological Weapons Convention and ensured its effectiveness against terrorist threats and challenges. With this in mind, Australia, in consultation with partners, had identified five means of strengthening the Convention: establishing an action plan to universalise and ensure its full implementation; as part of this, ensuring coordinated national implementation through appointment of a national Biological Weapons Convention focal point; comprehensively reviewing confidence-building measures to improve their value and participation; convening intersessional work to boost national implementation; and establishing a Biological Weapons Convention implementation support unit.

Some of the key elements that should be present in plans to universalise and ensure the full implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention were: calling on all States not party to ratify or accede to the Convention without delay and, meantime, adhere voluntarily to its provisions; using bilateral, regional and multilateral contacts with non-parties to promote adherence; providing assistance, where possible, to States seeking to ratify or accede to the Convention on developing national legislation; assisting States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention to implement national legislation and penal measures, pursuant to obligations in Articles III and IV; and calling on States to appoint a national focal point to coordinate domestic implementation.

JOHN DUNCAN (United Kingdom) said the aim and expectation for the Conference was for a positive and successful outcome. To that end, along with European Union partners, a number of working papers on a variety of key topics had been prepared. The United Kingdom's approach to the Conference would be one of openness and flexibility, and a willingness to listen to others' views in order to reach consensus. The United Kingdom considered that it was essential to maintain the authority of the Convention. It was important for the Conference to complete the traditional review of the operation of the Conference, and to see a final outcome that reaffirmed the unity against toxin and biological weapons in all circumstances, and the value and importance of the Convention and its articles to national and international security.

The agreement that all scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention and its prohibitions were covered by the Convention as it stood should be reaffirmed, and it should be confirmed that there was a need for such periodic reviews of the Convention as was taking place now. The United Kingdom also supported the intersessional work programme that was undertaken between 2003-2005, which was less traditional, and had proved to be a particularly effective and useful process, in which much valuable information was shared, and much work undertaken on a range of important issues to strengthen the Convention, work which was continuing to make an impact. A further work programme was desirable to strengthen and enhance implementation of the Convention by its States parties at the national, regional, and international levels.

ANATOLY I. ANTONOV (Russian Federation) said the Russian Federation fully complied with the obligations under the Convention and other States should do so too. The Russian Federation fully supported the main goal of the Convention - prohibiting the development, production and stockpiling of biological and toxin weapons. The Russian Federation saluted the 155 States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention. Nevertheless, there were still a number of countries that were not parties to the Convention. It was vital for those countries to join it. The urgency of taking steps on non-proliferation was connected to the issue of biological agents getting into the hands of the wrong actors. In that respect, national legislation measures should be taken to avoid sensitive materials ending up in the hands of terrorists.

States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention should look carefully at their national legislation to comply with the provisions of the treaty. With reference to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, it called upon countries to withdraw reservations as expressed in 2000. Articles V and VI, dealing with addressing all emerging concerns, were adequate to help in achieving a resolution of disputes.

The Biological Weapons Convention was the only mechanism existing today, and it was important to strengthen it in terms of compliance. The Russian Federation paid special attention to confidence-building measures. The Review Conference had to look at the reason why only a small number of countries had so far submitted reports to the Convention on this issue.

CHANG DONG-HEE (Republic of Korea) said since it came into effect in 1975, the Biological Weapons Convention remained the fundamental legal and normative foundation of collective endeavours to prevent and prohibit the use of biological and toxic weapons. However, advances in biotechnology and life sciences and their widespread availability had increased the possibility that proliferators, both State and non-State, could take advantage of loopholes inherent in the Convention. In light of the potential threats posed by these new developments, the Convention needed to be reinforced if it was to adequately address these new challenges. This year's Review Conference provided an excellent opportunity not only to assess how the Convention in its entirety had been operating for the last ten years, but also to cultivate the political will necessary to strengthen it.

Through a comprehensive, article-by-article review of the Convention, there should be a reaffirmation and elaboration of the current understanding of the provisions of the Convention in the light of the new scientific and technological developments.

National implementation, universal adherence and the continuation of inter-sessional work, among others, were critical components of the collective efforts to strengthen the Convention. It would be even more constructive for the inter-sessional work to be conducted on a more regular and formal basis. The Republic of Korea was unwaveringly committed to the letter and spirit of the Convention, and hoped that there would be meaningful and tangible results produced at the Conference, through collective flexibility and openness.

IDRISS JAZAÏRY (Algeria) said this Review Conference was taking place within an international context marked by tensions and threats to international peace and security. The risks of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the rising of regional conflicts, the exacerbation of poverty in the countries in the South, as well as the danger of access to the use of weapons of mass destruction by international terrorists, were some of the threats that weakened collective security in the world. In facing this situation, the multilateral framework, conventional and institutional, which was supposed to provide solutions to these problems, found itself affected by lack of progress. Algeria regretted the fact that the question of the Verification Protocol, in spite of having the support of almost all the States Parties, had not yet gained consensus. It was important for the Convention to reach universality to fight against proliferation and the elimination of biological weapons. Algeria supported the idea of developing regional mechanisms to promote the universality of the Convention.

In that sense, taking into account the current worrisome and deteriorating situation, it was the Middle East that called for a particular action on the part of the international community. It was necessary to send a strong message to call upon Israel, the only obstacle to the creation of a weapons of mass destruction free zone, to conform to international legislation in this respect. This objective was more urgent than ever. But Israel had not hesitated, according to some reports, to use partially depleted uranium and phosphorus weapons in Lebanon over the summer. These incidents were counter to the progress the international community was seeking to achieve.

PAUL MEYER (Canada) said disease itself was the world's oldest weapon of mass destruction, showing no respect for race, creed, borders or politics. The spread of infectious diseases, whether by natural or deliberate means, had the potential to bring humanity to its knees yet again. Notwithstanding the cause of an outbreak of disease, be it a deliberate act of war or terrorism, or the age-old route of natural infection, the results could be the same. To address such threats, in which the potential impacts were so great, required a coordinated, multifaceted approach, that harnessed all of the many and diverse resources at the world's disposal. In this regard, the immense contribution of the Convention should be acknowledged and defended. However, the Convention needed to be strengthened if it was to fulfil its great promise and forever rid the world of biological weapons.

The Convention's provisions, as amplified in subsequent Review Conference agreements, represented the core obligations of States. However, much work remained to be done to achieve full compliance with and participation in all these commitments. At the same time, there should be collaboration to develop new and innovative ways to uphold and reinforce the Convention. Canada was working in a variety of other fora which directly supported the Convention's non-proliferation objectives. Time was short, and all delegations should harness their common purposes

and work together to make the Conference a success.

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