

**STATEMENT BY THE HOLY SEE TO THE SIXTH REVIEW CONFERENCE  
OF THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION**

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Mr Vice-President, I would first of all like to extend my delegation's congratulations to you..... We are convinced that prohibition on biological weapons is a basic element for the building of peace and security for the whole family of Man and, noting the failure of the Fifth Review Conference, States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention are now faced with a challenge whose stakes are so important for Mankind that success is the only option. It is everybody's responsibility to strengthen the norms which the Convention continually recalls. Not all taboos should be eradicated, quite the contrary. Some taboos are a necessary condition for life in society, or for life. Using life to destroy life, using science which should be used to fight disease and suffering, using science, I say, to sow death and destruction should remain an absolute taboo. Apart from the fact that it's illusory anyway, the very idea of using biological weapons to win a war should remain in the domain of the unthinkable.

This feeling, this conviction, has been present for so long in Mankind's collective consciousness and unconsciousness. There may have been great temptations at certain points in history to break this salutary taboo, but revolution in life sciences and biotechnology, together with certain suicidal trends, lead us to fear the worse for the whole of Mankind, even for those who believe that they might be able to benefit from the use of biological weapons. It is urgent for practical steps to be taken at the national, regional and international levels in order to prevent the irreparable acts being carried out. Bio-terrorism can only be countered by a shared will to act in the fields of security and bio-security.

Universality for the Convention should be a priority. No State should remain on the outside looking in whatever the pretext. As a consequence we need to see unflinching cooperation in good faith going beyond the economic and commercial interests of the various parties. With a combined effort of States Parties in order to take account *inter alia* of the risks of dual use of the life sciences, we need to involve all those who take part in research, industry, management or control. Scientists, university people, industrialists, governmental bodies, international agencies must feel collective responsibility for the use of biotechnology for the promotion of life and overall human development, which should benefit all countries through responsible research and industry and, of course, through international cooperation.

I would here like to underline the importance of ethics training for students and researchers in the field of life sciences. Codes of conduct should be prepared, disseminated and respected by all those involved. Ethics are a prior condition on

top of which you could build laws and control carried out by States and competent international organizations.

To ensure that the Convention does not remain a dead letter, it is essential for States Parties to emphasize transparency and the adoption of confidence-building measures. No State acting in isolation can win the war against the proliferation of biological weapons. Transparency is the best means of gradually building confidence. However, there is a basic question there. What do you do when there is no confidence? States Parties have the duty to develop a number of measures to show their good faith and strict compliance with obligations which all Parties have undertaken.

Mr Vice-Chair, the Biological Weapons Convention is an essential element for Mankind's security and for our very survival. The States Parties have the means to succeed. They showed this in 2002 when they found solutions accepted by all in order to get out of the deadlock. This Sixth Review Conference should constitute a new point of departure. Finding the framework and the mechanism to carry on a regular discussion, exchange and negotiations should be possible. It is vital for the process initiated in 2002 to remain alive and effective. There are important risks and difficulties, but only if we act alone and have a common will to do so can we avoid and overcome these problems. I thank you Madam.