



BioWeapons Prevention Project

Statement by the
BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP)
to the Expert Meeting under the auspices of
the BTWC

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BioWeapons Prevention Project

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1. Mr President, Distinguished Representatives, it is a great honour to be invited to make a statement to this Expert Group meeting in my role as Director of the international NGO, the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP). The BWPP is a global network of civil society organizations. It monitors political, societal, scientific and technological developments with possible implications for the use of disease as a weapon. Tomorrow, as part of this undertaking, we will be launching the second version of the *BioWeapons Monitor*, an Internet-based publication that will enable you to build reports dealing with the various aspects of compliance with the norm against the weaponization of disease or developments that affect the status of that norm. The Delegates who participated in the 2006 Review Conference will remember that the BWPP produced short daily reports on the discussions. I am pleased to announce that we will be publishing MX Reports. The first issue was distributed this morning. Should you have missed it, it can also be downloaded from the BWPP website at <http://www.bwpp.org/2007%20MX/MX2007Resources.html>.
2. This Meeting of the Experts—the first of the second Inter-sessional Process—starts under a good omen. The 6th Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) ended with a sense of achievement. The contrast with the first meeting of the First Inter-sessional Process four years ago cannot be greater, when States Parties and friends of the BTWC were still reeling from the failure of the 5th Review Conference and were unsure of what the new process of annual meetings of Experts and States Parties might achieve.
3. The second reason why the present meeting commences under a good omen is the renewed global interest in the BTWC, as evidenced by the fact that over the past two and a half months four new parties to the Convention have been announced, bringing the total to 159. We welcome Montenegro (as successor State to Serbia and Montenegro), Kazakhstan, Trinidad and Tobago and Gabon and hope that they will become active participants in the BTWC meetings. Universalization of the BTWC is one important goal identified by the States Parties and the BWPP expresses the wish that the States Parties collectively, in a regional setting or individually consider ways and means to sustain this fresh wave of ratifications and accessions.
4. The third reason why the second intersessional process may be off to a good start is the establishment of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU). Although its mandate and staffing are limited, the ISU nevertheless means that for the first time in the history of

the BTWC there is institutional permanency. Not only does the ISU ensure continuity of activities, it will also grow into a focal point for States Parties and non-States Parties alike and should therefore become an important tool for continuing the process of universalizing the Convention and coordinating offers and requests for assistance to implement the BTWC nationally. We would also hope that over time the ISU may contribute significantly to increasing the relevancy of the annual submissions under the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs).

5. The topics for discussion are ‘Ways and means to enhance national implementation, including enforcement of national legislation, strengthening of national institutions and coordination among national law enforcement institutions’ and ‘Regional and sub-regional cooperation on BWC implementation’. Universal adherence to the BTWC has a quantitative and a qualitative dimension. While the former notion refers to the number of States that are Party to the convention; the latter refers to their involvement in the development and implementation of the treaty regime. It is clear that the transposition of the treaty obligations into national laws and regulations and their enforcement is a central part of qualitative universality. Active participation in the BTWC meetings—be they expert meetings, meetings of the States Parties or Review Conferences—contributes to the future shape of the central norm against the weaponization of disease. The involvement of regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations in the BTWC proceedings—if continued—could contribute greatly to both dimensions of universality.
6. Indeed, I particularly welcome the attention that will be paid to regional and sub-regional cooperation in the present discussions. It has always been my personal contention that the discussion and negotiation of BTWC matters on an almost exclusively global level (here in Geneva) was a major contributing factor to the failure of the Ad Hoc Group to conclude a legally binding protocol. Looking back at the history of the negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), we note that when discussions stalled on the global level, activities were undertaken on the regional level (such as the discussions on a Chemical Weapon Free Zone in Europe) or even on a bilateral level, before global negotiations were resumed. While perhaps some initiatives were doomed to fail, they have nevertheless resulted in common understandings among key politicians in the region and principal stakeholders. This emergence of a common will and common interest in the outcomes of the negotiations was critical to the conclusion of the CWC. Stakeholdership in the BTWC—both within governmental

departments and agencies and in civil society and among the scientific and professional communities—is what is still missing in many countries. The resulting lack of prioritization affects decisions to ratify or accede to the convention or the mobilization of required resources to effectively implement it.

7. The national experts and government representatives will discuss how their respective countries can enhance treaty implementation and enforcement of the prohibitions and how they can cooperate with each other in these areas. Nonetheless, ample consideration should be given to these issues in relationship to the non-States Parties. Indeed, the constitution of certain countries requires having implementation legislation in place before the appropriate decision-making bodies can authorize ratification or accession. However, based on its experiences in various outreach activities in different parts of the world, the BioWeapons Prevention Project has learnt that:

- certain non-States Parties were unaware of the existence of the BTWC. In Africa in particular, several States acquired their independence after the entry into force of the BTWC. The lack of an international organization to oversee the implementation of the BTWC meant that there was no central organ to promote the convention. The BWPP also learnt that several erstwhile colonies became party to the convention because they assumed the international obligations of the former colony. The young governments then and their successors had little realization that the treaty requires national implementation. Again, the ISU can improve this situation dramatically within its current mandate and budget. However, there is also an important role for the regional and subregional international organizations to play in this respect.
- certain non-States Parties realize the growing importance of the BTWC as a security instrument and wish to join it, but fear doing so because of their perceived inability to meet the implementation obligations. The lack of human and financial resources and equipment to effectively execute those obligations nationally is a major obstacle. The interesting part of the BWPP's experience was that the assistance requests did not necessarily involve money or the transfer of equipment, but basic training and capacity building. The questions facing these people may be as mundane as how to organize the national oversight of biological and biotechnology activities taking place within the territory of the state and obtain the relevant data, for instance, to report under the CBMs. Once more, the ISU and active involvement of regional and subregional organizations may make a big difference.

8. The BWPP welcomes the presence of regional and subregional organizations at the present meeting. It also hopes that this will be the start of systematic representation at the BTWC meetings. However, we also wish to urge the States Parties who are members of the respective regional and sub-regional organizations to accord higher political importance to the quantitative and qualitative universality of the BTWC in their deliberations so as to buttress other inter-regional and bilateral initiatives in support of the convention.

9. Mr President, Distinguished Representatives, in my mind the main reason to augment the involvement of the regional and subregional organizations in the implementation and promotion of the BTWC is to establish and expand national and regional stakeholdership in the convention. A number of solutions to transparency and building confidence can be worked out on the regional level, creating experiences and expertise that may lay the foundation for a common vision concerning the future of the BTWC, a cornerstone of cooperative security. In turn, such stakeholdership is critical to the effective implementation and the quantitative universalization of the BTWC. Thank you.