

Check Against Delivery



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

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Statement of Finland delivered by Titta Maja  
Deputy Permanent Representative of Finland  
to the Conference on Disarmament

Thank you Mr Chair,

Finland fully aligns itself with the state

ment to be made by the European Union and would like to add some remarks from a national perspective.

Let me start by congratulating you Mr. Chair for assuming your duties. Finland will contribute actively and fully support you in undertaking your tasks. These tasks are certainly not light as it rests with us, the States Parties of this Convention to take decisions that will guide our work towards a successful Review Conference next year.

No doubt the biological and toxic weapons convention is an important instrument of multi-lateral disarmament and non-proliferation. The convention has done its part in preventing the use of biological weapons. But in the light of the new technological advances, rapid exchange of information and also the emergence of non-state-parties we need to make sure that the convention and its practical implementation will live up to its expectations also in the future.

Finland would like to lend support to all those efforts that aim at establishing such structures that would enable a better functioning of the Convention. This includes the ability of States Parties to formally take collective action between the Review Conferences.

We also support a more focused role for the highly-valued work of experts. These specialists are in the cutting edge of technological developments and this expertise should further contribute to the work of States Party Meetings and effective decision making. Dedicated meetings of experts to address specific topics in order to develop recommendations for States Parties would be a step to a right direction.

We are also of the view that strengthening the Implementation Support Unit would benefit the whole community of States Parties. We should seek to enlarge the mandate and staffing of the ISU to correspond with the technological advances and the potential threats posed by these advances.

Chairman,

It's not only the methods of work and decision making but also the focus of work that needs to be enforced. Even if there is no consensus regarding verification at this stage it is vital to build confidence in compliance in other ways. States Parties would need to be able to demonstrate compliance through regular exchange of information by declarations and other means.

National implementation is a key element of the Convention and efforts to strengthen administrative and judicial means are welcome. Developing codes of conduct and conducting intensive training are some of the key measures to mitigate the risk of non-state actors accessing the materials, equipment and knowledge that could be used to develop biological or toxic weapons.

We truly see benefit in enhancing measures for monitoring developments in areas of science and technology suggesting that this could be looked together with the enhances focus for the work of experts.

Any alleged use of biological weapons should be investigated vigorously. The Secretary General's mechanism provides an instrument to investigate alleged use of chemical or biological weapons. We should further strengthen this mechanism and avoid creating competing ones. We commend efforts by Sweden, Germany, Denmark and others who have organized workshops and exercises on the bio side of the SG's mechanism. Our own bio experts have participated in these exercises.

Chairman,

Let me finally address the importance of international cooperation. As we have seen infectious disease epidemics pose not only an international health threat but also an international security threat. Accurate detection and diagnosis of infectious agents are basic requirements in biosecurity and also in health security.

Mr. Chair,

Finland welcomes the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) as an effort by States, international organizations, and civil society to establish capacity to prevent, detect and rapidly respond to biological threats, whether naturally occurring, intentional, or accidental. In this regard, it complements our common efforts to ensure the absence of biological weapons.

The United States, as the initiator of GHSA, served as the first chair of the GHSA steering group. Finland assumed responsibility for GHSA for the current year, and will be followed by Indonesia in 2016. We want to express our gratitude to the United States for their unwavering support throughout our chairmanship. At the same time we want to express to Indonesia our best wishes and support for their chairmanship. We also want to thank all our partners.

During Finland's chairmanship year it has become evident, that health security is much more than fighting one disease no matter how severe they are or how devastating their consequences. Health security is about creating strong systems that are able to prevent the likelihood of disease outbreaks whether natural, intentional or accidental, deliberate, detect these threats early and respond to them rapidly and effectively. One of the key lessons learned this year on how to promote these three crucial stages – prevention, detection and response – is that

health security improvement needs to be a team effort. We need pragmatic actions that are cross-sectorial within the governments and include whole of society and multiple stakeholders from for profit sector to non-governmental stakeholders. As diseases do not recognize national borders, this team effort should also be expanded to countries in need of assistance through creating partnerships and using all resources available.

One example of the concrete actions taken towards improved health security is launching the country assessments. So far, GHSA has completed five pilot country assessments and one country assessment after the pilot phase. Consistent feedback from all assessed countries is that they have appreciated and realized the benefit of bringing together the different national stakeholders to discuss health security. Most countries reflect on the rarity of this happening and the tradition of working in silos. Thus the GHSA country assessments have served as a strong incentive for in-country coordination and networking. The country assessments can be a concrete tool to channel financing where mostly needed. Finland will even after our chairmanship continue in the lead of the GHSA country assessment process.

As our national commitment to the GHSA agenda and the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Materials and Weapons of Mass Destruction and Article X of BTWC Finland has in 2014 initiated a 5-year project with Tanzania on strengthening laboratory capacity and raising awareness in biosecurity and biosafety in Tanzania.

Mr Chair,

Recent threats posed by weapons of mass destruction indicate that we need swift and concerted efforts to counter this phenomenon. Finland believes that a robust and inclusive preparatory process is necessary in the run-up for a review conference and stands ready to contribute together with other States Parties and civil society to a successful preparation and outcome of this conference.

Thank you.

