

Statement by Morocco

Monday 24 August 2009, Morning Session

First of all, I would like to extend my delegation's congratulations to you [Mr. Chairman] on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Meeting of States Parties to the Meeting of Experts 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 for 2009.

We are convinced that your professional commitment and experience, your diplomatic tact and the support that your country, Canada, has shown concerning questions of disarmament in general and the work to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in particular, are definitely a guarantee that our work will be successful. Our thanks also go to Mr. Richard Lennane and his team, the Implementation Support Unit, for the excellent preparations for this Meeting of Experts.

My delegation supports the statement made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Movement of Non-aligned Countries and other States Parties.

The holding of this Meeting of Experts of States Parties at the BWC devoted to the implementation of Article X of the Convention comes at just the right time; in fact, it coincides with a period when the entire world has been compelled to combine efforts so as better to prepare to cope with one of the biggest pandemics of recent years, the virus AN1H1. This 'flu, which has spread in a large number of countries and has already given rise to the deaths of several people, requires worldwide solidarity and unflinching planetary-wide cooperation with the support of all countries and pharmaceutical companies so as to curb the propagation of the disease.

In this context, the relevance of Article X of the BWC is clearer than ever before. States Parties which have committed themselves under Article X of the Convention to facilitating the widest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technical information related to the use of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins for peaceful purposes, are duty bound to implement this provision so as, on the one hand, to encourage the universality of the Convention by stimulating the accession of non-States Parties and also to contain as much as possible the pandemic through strengthening capacity in terms of response in the States Parties which request the transfer of technology, information and expertise.

International cooperation and exchange of information and technology for peaceful purposes are among the most important pillars of the Convention. However, this area does not have an appropriate mechanism yet for this purpose. In this framework, my delegation would appeal to States Parties to adopt and implement the recommendation of the Movement of Non-aligned Countries and other States Parties calling for the establishment of a mechanism for the full implementation of Article X.

The increasingly urgent need for such a mechanism was reaffirmed during earlier Review Conferences. The Sixth Review Conference of the BWC reaffirmed the fact that institutional ways and means which exist in the area of multilateral cooperation among States Parties must be strengthened to promote international cooperation for peaceful purposes in areas which fall under the Convention, such as medicine, public health, agriculture and the environment.

The Review Conference has also recognized that there should be effective coordination between the specialized agencies of the UN system and international and regional organizations with the aim of facilitating scientific cooperation and the transfer of technologies.

In this connection, my delegation would like to underscore how interested it is in initiatives taken in this area, such as the revision of the World Health Regulation which entered into force in June 2007, whose main objective it is to prevent, protect, control and provide a response in the area of public health to health risks while avoiding any interference with international trade or interaction.

The same goes for public health emergencies of international concern (PHEIC) which is defined as an international event which is a public health risk for other countries through the propagation of disease and this requires a coordinated international response.

For its part, the FAO has developed EMPRES, which is an emergency prevention system for transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases. Thus, it is important for the Convention on Bacterial (Biological) Weapons to have a mechanism to facilitate exchanges for peaceful purposes between States Parties in areas falling under the Convention. This mechanism would promote universality and would work against the proliferation of biological weapons.

The Kingdom of Morocco has two research laboratories which meet national and international very strict norms in the area of safety. It has no programme for research and development in the area of defence against biological weapons. Not having any specific laws on biological weapons, Morocco does nevertheless have a certain number of legal texts which apply to all weapons of war. However, the import, trade in, possession and use of poisonous substances is subject to the authority of certain facilities such as the Departments of Health, Agriculture, Industry or Mines, depending on the destination of such projects.

Moreover, the manufacture, sale and distribution of vaccines and therapeutic serums and other biological products, as well as the import, manufacture, sale and distribution of the aforementioned biological products, are subject to an authorization issued by the Ministry of Health after advice has been given by a technical commission.

A bill is currently being developed by the Ministry of Health in coordination with the National Health Institute on microbiological agents and other biological agents in Morocco.

Allow me to reiterate the attention given by Morocco to the cooperation for peaceful purposes in the area of medicine and substances for manufacturing vaccines, as well as the exchange of information and technologies to apply the provisions of the Convention on Biological Weapons.
