



REGERINGSKANSLIET

## Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden

Statement by H.E. Ms. Veronika Bard  
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2015 Meeting of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

Monday 14 December 2015

Chairperson,

Sweden is fully aligned with the statement to be delivered by the European Union. We would like to make a few brief additional comments from a national viewpoint. But first of all, let me welcome you to the chair of this important conference, and assure you of the full support of my delegation and warmly welcome Andorra and Mauritania as new States Parties.

Chairperson,

This meeting of states parties takes place 40 years after the entry into force of the Biological Weapons Convention, and a year before the Eighth Review Conference. The recent Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone reminded us in a tragically graphic manner about what is at stake here this week. It showed us how outbreaks of infectious disease, whether natural, accidental or deliberate, can threaten not only public health, but the entire infrastructure and economic development of a country, as well as our global security.

Against this background, Sweden notes with satisfaction that a number of proposals are already on the table for how we can endeavour to strengthen the review process, with a view to bolstering the relevance and implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention. Sweden is pleased to co-sponsor a working paper on “Addressing Modern Threats in the Biological Weapons Convention” together with a cross-regional group, and is prepared to co-sponsor one with India and the United States on national export controls. We have also provided input to Canada’s working paper on contributions by Global Partnership members to the implementation of Article X.



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Chairperson,

The current inter-sessional period has inspired some interesting exchanges, in particular on science and technology – and I am pleased to highlight the contributions of the Swedish Defence Research Agency in this regard. However, we must conclude that, so far, it has not led to the type of focused discussion on key aspects of the Convention that we had anticipated.

Sweden hopes that next year's Review Conference will agree on a more constructive and goal-oriented inter-sessional process, with a view to generating results that may strengthen the Convention. This will require that all states parties are willing to show some flexibility. Like our EU partners, Sweden believes that the best way forward may be initial cross-regional discussions in separate working groups on issues where there seems to be a good chance of achieving consensus. This may include topics like Protection against Use; Monitoring of Science and Technology; Demonstration of National Implementation; and Confidence-Building Measures.

In the run-up to next year's Review Conference, Sweden would like to see a process characterized by effectiveness and inclusion. That is why we support the proposal to have two Preparatory Committee meetings in 2016, allowing a thorough preparatory work process and enhancing the chances of a successful Review Conference.

Chairperson,

As is well known, Sweden is a strong champion of the UN Secretary General's mechanism for prompt investigation of alleged use of biological or chemical weapons. The 2013 UN investigation in Syria, led by Dr. Åke Sellström, has demonstrated that the Mechanism remains significant and viable.

In June this year, Sweden, in cooperation with UNODA, hosted a first workshop to address requirements for creating a network of designated laboratories that could determine the use of biological weapons in case of an investigation of alleged use. The Stockholm meeting was attended by a number of laboratories on the UN roster, as well as Dr. Sellström and representatives of UNODA and the World Health Organisation. We very much welcome Switzerland's initiative hosting a similar workshop last month, and their plans for further events. There is a continuing need for training of experts and technical preparations to ensure the operational readiness of the Mechanism, should the worst happen. Sweden will certainly continue its engagement in the coming years.



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In this context, my delegation looks forward to side events by France and UNIDIR on the Geneva Protocol and by Switzerland on laboratory networks. I would also like to highlight the twelfth triannual chemical and biological weapons symposium, to be held in Stockholm from 8 to 10 June 2016. Information is available with the Swedish delegation.

Chairperson,

Biological weapons stand out among weapons of mass destruction as the type where interconnections with peaceful activities are the most conspicuous. New methods and equipment are developed at breakneck speed for use in research and life sciences to develop medicines and other tools to fight diseases. Yet oftentimes the very same methods and equipment have the potential for misuse, by States or Non-State Actors alike, to develop biological weapons that threaten humans, animals and plants. And with the rapid technological development occurring, these advanced capacities will spread, both globally and within states.

Chairperson,

Sweden was a major partner in the response to the Ebola crisis. We also remain a leader in the international efforts to combat antibiotic resistance, and an important contributor to the World Health Organization the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN and the World Organisation for Animal Health. Our joint efforts in the context of the Secretary General's Mechanism, the Global Partnership, the Global Health Security Agenda, and the WHO International Health Regulations help strengthen bio-defence and preparedness globally. However, while these are important complements to the work of the Biological Weapons Convention they can never be substitutes for a strong and effective Treaty.

With these words, I wish us all a successful Conference.

Thank you, Chairperson.



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