

## **The Value of Codes of Conduct and Other Measures to Promote a Culture of Responsibility**

Remarks by Ambassador Georgi Avramchev  
Chairman of the 2008 Meetings of the Biological Weapons Convention

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you will be aware from the statement I made earlier, the issue of codes of conduct is one of the topics the Biological Weapons Convention is dealing with in its work programme this year. This is in fact the second time the member states of the BWC have specifically addressed this topic: the BWC meetings in 2005 were entirely devoted to consideration of the content, promulgation and adoption of codes of conduct.

So it is clear that the member states of the BWC consider codes of conduct to be an important part of their overall effort to strengthen the operation of the treaty and reduce the risks of biological weapons being developed, acquired or used. I believe that the importance the member states place on codes of conduct stems from their recognition that no government, international organisation or initiative – no matter how well-resourced – can hope to effectively monitor the large and rapidly growing number of biological science and biotechnology facilities and activities around the world. To effectively manage the risks posed by the rapid advances in biology – while avoiding hampering legitimate research – we need to involve the scientists themselves.

The Meeting of States Parties to the BWC in December 2005 agreed that while the primary responsibility for implementing the Convention rests with member states, codes of conduct "can support the object and purpose of the Convention by making a significant and effective contribution ... to combating the present and future threats posed by biological and toxin weapons, as well as by raising awareness of the Convention, and by helping relevant actors to fulfill their legal, regulatory and professional obligations and ethical principles".

The Meeting also agreed that "codes of conduct should avoid impeding scientific discovery or placing undue constraints on research or international cooperation and exchange for peaceful purposes". It went on to say that "codes of conduct should require and enable relevant actors to have a clear understanding of the content, purpose and reasonably foreseeable consequences of their activities, and of the need to abide by the obligations contained in the Convention".

The discussions on codes of conduct at the Meeting of Experts this year followed similar lines, and you can see some of the main themes in the Chairman's "synthesis paper" that has been circulated. My own impression is that in discussions since 2005, the diplomatic and scientific communities have converged on common ground. On the diplomatic side, there is greater recognition of the need to involve the scientific community, and that codes of conduct can help extend the responsibility for implementing the provisions of the BWC to the level of the individual. For its part, the scientific community has largely recognized that codes of conduct and related measures are not a threat to scientific freedom, but rather a practical tool which can help scientists to pursue their objectives safely, securely and lawfully, to reduce the risks of malign use of science, and to build public confidence in their activities.

In my time as Chairman, I have been impressed by the enthusiasm and constructive attitude with which scientific and professional organizations, as well as individual scientists and academics, have approached our work. I have also been pleased by the way in which BWC member states have included these organizations and individuals in their work. I am sure that this spirit of collaboration has emerged from mutual recognition of the important potential benefits of codes of conduct and other measures to promote a culture of responsibility. And I am looking forward to seeing how this collaboration develops, at this meeting, at the BWC Meeting of States Parties in December, and in coming years.

Thank you.

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