

**CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE  
DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCTION AND  
STOCKPILING OF BACTERIOLOGICAL  
(BIOLOGICAL) AND TOXIN WEAPONS AND ON  
THEIR DESTRUCTION**

**Statement to the Conference on Disarmament by Ambassador Masood  
Khan (Pakistan), President of the Sixth Review Conference and Chairman  
of the 2007 meetings of the Biological Weapons Convention**

7 August 2007

Mr. President,

I thank you for inviting me to address the Conference on Disarmament on the Biological Weapons Convention.

It was a privilege to listen to Ambassador Rogelio Pfirter, Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, as our guest in this chamber. He joined us today to celebrate ten years of operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, one of the most important and successful products of this Conference. Ambassador Pfirter's remarks are an important reminder of what can be achieved in the area of multilateral arms control and disarmament.

The BWC, which entered into force a little over thirty years ago in 1975, was also a product of this Conference, albeit in an earlier incarnation. There were once plans to tackle chemical and biological disarmament together, in a single instrument. For various reasons, that course was abandoned, and instead the international community's approach to stopping chemical and biological weapons has followed different courses.

The BWC is a simple instrument, only a few pages long. Its prohibitions are clear, succinct, categorical and definitive, but it is an instrument of principle rather than procedure. It contains no provision for monitoring or verification of compliance, no provision for an implementing organization, no details of how alleged breaches should be investigated, no organized means of helping States Parties meet their obligations. Many considered this a serious shortcoming. For much of the history of the BWC, States Parties and others

have fretted about the effectiveness of the treaty as a practical barrier against the development of biological weapons.

In 2001, when the Fifth Review Conference foundered on the sharp differences to conclude a protocol to verify the BWC regime, it seemed possible that the multilateral efforts against biological weapons could come to a halt. Yet this did not happen. Thanks to the resourcefulness and determination of the States Parties, the BWC has embarked on a new course: but one that is arguably better suited to the unique challenges posed by biological weapons in today's world.

First came a period of damage control and resuscitation. At the resumed session of the Fifth Review Conference in 2002, States Parties succeeded in putting their differences to one side in order to establish a work programme for 2003 to 2005, at which they would work on several specific topics related to better implementation of the Convention. There would be no attempt to negotiate or agree on binding measures, or even recommendations. Expectations were correspondingly low. And yet, to the surprise of many, the process was a success. Experts from all around the world gathered to share experiences and ideas on how to deal with the threat posed by biological weapons. Officials from health, science and agriculture ministries made connections with their counterparts in defence, justice, foreign affairs and security agencies. In the period after the terrorist atrocities of September 2001, there was great interest in cooperating against the possibility of bioterrorism, and this gave a further boost to the project.

Just as importantly, the expert meetings provided an opportunity for the world's scientific community and medical professionals to become directly engaged in developing a response to a threat that, in a sense, had become too widespread and all-pervasive for governments to tackle alone. The extraordinary advances achieved in biosciences meant that biological weapons were - in theory - within reach of the smallest laboratory and most modest budget. No government, no international organization, could hope to monitor effectively the tens of thousands of small biotechnology facilities in operation worldwide. Clearly, this was a problem that needed a collective, multifaceted and multidimensional approach. The work programme of 2003 to 2005 showed that such an approach could work, and started to develop the necessary network of collaboration and coordination: a network that must weave international, regional and domestic strands into a flexible and resilient fabric of oversight and prevention.

The Sixth Review Conference in 2006, over which I presided, built on the good results of the intersessional process and the confidence it had engendered

among States Parties. Our goal was to transcend the divisions of the past, and settle the BWC on its new course. This was a challenge, certainly, but one to which the States Parties were ready to rise. The constructive, practical and realistic manner in which all States Parties approached their preparations for the Conference, while maintaining their long-standing goals and positions of principle, was a testimony to their wisdom, and proof of the great potential of multilateral diplomacy. It was a difficult Conference, but ultimately a successful one. I would like to thank sincerely all those who contributed to the result, including many of my colleagues here today.

The Review Conference agreed on a Final Declaration embodying a common vision for the Convention and its implementation, ending a ten-year gap and resolving many of the issues that had so divided States Parties. This in itself was a fundamental step forward that will open the way for improved collective action against the threat of biological weapons. The Conference also agreed on many practical measures, including:

- A detailed new intersessional work programme to help ensure effective implementation of the Convention until the Seventh Review Conference in 2011;
- Specific measures to obtain universal adherence to the Convention;
- An update of the mechanism for the confidence-building measures, and foreshadowing a more thorough review in 2011;
- Requiring States Parties to nominate a national point of contact to better coordinate various aspects of national implementation and universalisation; and
- Various measures to improve national implementation, including of Article X of the Convention dealing with the peaceful uses of biological science and technology.

Perhaps more significantly, the Conference decided to establish an Implementation Support Unit for the Convention, addressing a long-standing need for institutional support for the efforts of States Parties in implementing the Convention itself and the decisions of the review conferences. The Implementation Support Unit is now operational and is busy preparing for the 2007 Meeting of Experts, which will be held here in Geneva from 20 to 24 August.

On the opening day of that meeting, it will be my honour to host with the Director-General of UNOG, Mr. Ordzhonikidze, an event to formally launch

the Unit, to which all delegations are most cordially invited. We have also invited the United Nations Secretary-General's High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Sergio Duarte, to join us on this symbolic occasion.

Implementation of the other decisions of the Review Conference is also well under way. The decision to undertake coordinated action to encourage non-members to join the Convention is already bearing fruit, with three states - Kazakhstan, Montenegro and Trinidad and Tobago - having joined since the Conference concluded. This has increased the number of States Parties from 155 to 158. The new system for secure electronic distribution of the confidence-building measures is already operational, and the measures submitted so far in 2007 are now available on this system. Many States Parties have already nominated their national contact points, and are in regular contact with the Implementation Support Unit.

The Meeting of Experts marks the formal commencement of the new intersessional work programme. Many States Parties have been preparing for this meeting, which will address the following two topics:

- (i) Ways and means to enhance national implementation, including enforcement of national legislation, strengthening of national institutions and coordination among national law enforcement institutions.
- (ii) Regional and sub-regional cooperation on implementation of the Convention.

We will be working closely with Interpol and relevant regional organisations to improve the operation of national legislation and regulations, and enhance coordination among national law enforcement institutions.

Next year, our work will turn to the important topics of biosafety and biosecurity, and education and awareness-raising. This will be an important opportunity to engage once again with the scientific, medical and educational communities and continue to develop a coordinated, interlinked approach to the prevention of the misuse of biological science and technology. In subsequent years, we will deal with international cooperation and assistance for combating infectious disease, and for responding to cases of alleged use of biological weapons. Again, work in these areas will require integration and coordination with other agencies and activities, illustrating once more that our task is a shared one.

Mr. President,

I am pleased to report that, thanks to the creative and constructive efforts of the States Parties, the BWC is in good shape and ready to confront the challenges it faces. The outcome of the Sixth Review Conference has given us a solid basis for our efforts. We can take some satisfaction from the result, especially in light of the difficulties and divisions we have experienced in the past. But much remains to be done: the success of the Conference is a means to an end, not an end in itself. All States Parties need to continue to work hard to turn words into action, to overcome their remaining differences, and to convert their shared vision into reality. Provided they do so, I am confident that the Biological Weapons Convention will make a genuine and significant contribution to reducing the risks of biological weapons being developed or used by any actor, anywhere in the world.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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