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Statement

by

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before

**the Meeting of the States Parties
to the
Convention on the Prohibition of the
Development, Production and Stockpiling of
Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons
(BTWC)**

Geneva – 1 December 2008

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In the name of God, the Compassionate the Merciful

Mr. Chairman

At the outset, I would like to join other delegations in congratulating you on your assumption of the Chairmanship of the 2008 Meeting of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). My delegation has confidence in your diplomatic skills and ability to preside over this meeting and lead it to a successful outcome. Please be assured of my delegation support in discharging your task.

Mr. Chairman,

The Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to the multilaterally negotiated instruments on the prohibition and total elimination of Weapons of Mass Destruction including the BWC which are essential for the maintenance of international and regional peace and security. In our view, multilateralism and multilaterally agreed solutions, in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter, provide the only sustainable method of addressing disarmament and international security issues. Therefore, while the present setting for our deliberations and discussions may be useful in promoting common understanding on the BWC among States Parties, we strongly believe that this mechanism can not be a substitute to the multilateral negotiations on the Protocol for strengthening the Convention. In our view, the only sustainable and durable way of strengthening the Convention is through multilateral negotiations aimed at concluding a non-discriminatory, legally binding instrument added to the Convention. We call upon those who have continued to oppose such protocol to reconsider their position and abide by the wish of international community.

We also believe that the effective contribution of the Convention to the international and regional peace and security would be enhanced through universal adherence to the Convention. In this vein, my delegation was encouraged by the interim report presented by you, Mr. Chairman, at the Meeting of Experts in last August, on the universality of the Convention. We are delighted that seven states have joined the Convention since Sixth BWC Review Conference and look forward to witnessing the continuation of this progress. My delegation hopes that more accessions will be realized and in this regard, we welcome the efforts of Cameroon, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Comoros and Côte d'Ivoire to join the BWC family.

Nevertheless, after more than three decades since the entry into force of the Convention, its universality has yet to be realized and regrettably there are still a number of non-Parties who have not even signed the Convention. In this regard, it should be underlined that among these non-signatories, some with advanced biotechnology which are situated in volatile regions pose a serious threat to the international and regional peace and security. Unfortunately, some of these non-signatories have continued to receive unhindered biotechnological assistance from certain States Parties. Such assistance might be used to the development of biological weapons and the Countries providing this assistance should bear their responsibility.

The Islamic Republic of Iran calls upon non-signatories to the BWC to accede to the Convention without further delay and encourages those who are in a position to do so particularly the Depositaries, to spare no effort to persuade them to join the Convention. We also call upon the States Parties to remain committed to their obligations not to transfer any equipment, materials (including biological agents and toxins), as well as scientific and technological information to non-Parties to the Convention. Introduction of disincentives for the non-Parties would facilitate the realization of the universality of the Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

Now I would like to touch upon another important issue on our agenda, namely Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). The Islamic Republic of Iran has already submitted its CBMs report to cover 2007. As it was previously stated by my delegation, annual exchange of information regime established in 1986 and improved in 1991 was aimed at increasing transparency and reducing the ambiguities. Naturally, it should increase the confidence among States Parties and thus facilitate the international cooperation in the field of peaceful biological activities; otherwise the advantage of annually participating in such transparency measures might be put into question.

Mr. Chairman,

The extensive discussion on bio-safety and bio-security during the Experts meeting in August 2008 has provided good opportunities to inveterate once more the importance of bio-safety and bio-security issues. The fresh ideas raised during that meeting, have enriched the experiences of the States Parties on how to effectively improve and implement the bio-safety and bio-security measures at the national level. However,

national measures to implement the Convention must not hinder the international cooperation for peaceful purposes and/ or limit peaceful scientific and technological development. In contrast, achieving necessary national standards in the fields of bio-safety and bio-security requires international cooperation and strengthening the implementation of Article X of the Convention. In this line, we would like to reiterate that bio-security and bio-safety should not serve as a pretext to hamper peaceful international cooperation enshrined in Article X of the Convention or to create restrictions on the development of scientific research and on publishing the results of such research.

Mr. Chairman,

On the issue of oversight, education, awareness raising and adoption and/or development of codes of conduct with the aim of preventing misuse in the context of advances in bio-science and bio-technology research with the potential of use for purposes prohibited by the Convention, my delegation presented its views in the meeting of experts of the States Parties and therefore, I refrain from repeating them with the hope that they would be adequately considered along with the views of others in preparing the final report of present meeting.

Mr. Chairman,

We share your concluding remarks at the last meeting of experts of the States Parties that a clear theme which ran through both topics during our deliberations was that of balance and of the need for proportional measures, for carefully assessing risks, for balancing security concerns against the need for nurturing research and ensuring the peaceful development of biological science and technology. We also fully support your conclusion that another central theme was that of "no one size fits all". My delegation expects these notions to be dully reflected in the final report.

Mr. Chairman,

At the conclusion, as we are approaching next year meetings whose focus should be on Article X of the Convention, I would like to seize this opportunity to encourage the States Parties to provide information on how Article X is being implemented as set for in paragraph 54 of the Final Document of the Sixth Review Conference.

I thank you Mr. Chairman