

Unofficial translation

STATEMENT BY

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**AT THE MEETING OF STATES PARTIES
TO THE BIOLOGICAL AND TOXIN WEAPONS CONVENTION**

GENEVA, DECEMBER 1, 2008

Mr Chairman,

On behalf of the Russian delegation I would like to welcome you as Chairman of the meeting of States Parties to the BWC. We are confident that your guidance will help the States Parties to effectively address the issues that we have on the agenda. A fruitful meeting of experts in August has established a solid foundation for our upcoming discussion.

Russia views the BWC as one of the cornerstones of disarmament and non-proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction. As time goes on, its importance has only been rising.

We are satisfied with the outcome of the experts meeting in August. In its statement the Russian delegation covered my country's approaches to enhancing biosecurity of research involving pathogens and toxins and presented its views on codes of conduct for scientists.

We have keenly examined a synthesis paper prepared by you, which sums up the main points raised at the experts meeting. One may not fail to notice two important ideas that figure prominently in the paper. The first is the need for proportional measures and balanced approach to regulating sensitive biological research that would balance the likely profit from useful scientific discoveries against potential risks related to them. The second is the recognition that individual and local circumstances must be taken into account when addressing these issues. In August the Russian delegation advocated these principles and it is gratifying that you, having analysed presentations by other delegations, reached the same conclusion.

It is our view that the discussion on preventing the misuse of science for purposes prohibited by the Convention was especially interesting. Discoveries in life sciences bring considerable benefit for mankind, but malevolent mind may employ them for nefarious purposes. Rapid growth of science and technology is a challenge

that the regime prohibiting biological and toxin weapons must face and adapt itself in this evolving situation. You, Mr Chairman, arrived at the same conclusion when you spoke to the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. The dual use dimension of peaceful research is one of the most complex problems that we must continue to focus on.

Synthetic biology, that was discussed at the August meeting, may serve as an example of the dual use technology. Using genetic information, it allows to chemically synthesise traditional agents and create novel organisms with designer specifications. Such organisms may be identified and classified by traditional means only with difficulty. Experts believe that given the rapid development of capability offered by this technology, national oversight procedures and licensing of activities involving dangerous pathogens based on select agents list may soon become outdated and irrelevant.

For us it is clear that the States Parties are best advised to avoid addressing issues of science and technology relevant to the BWC on an ad hoc basis or from time to time when opportunity avails itself. We are of the view that the time has come to tackle this complex and important task on a sound permanent footing.

In this connection, we have taken note of paragraph 9(viii) of Chairman's synthesis paper. It contains a recommendation to regularly review scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention, and consider creating an international scientific advisory panel to independently analyze such developments. Given the growing significance of the BWC in the light of the rapid development of dual use science and technology, we deem it advisable to move towards practically considering the feasibility of setting up a permanent mechanism for monitoring and examination of scientific information relevant to the BWC. The findings of such reviews will be reported to the States Parties at their meetings in Geneva. Besides, it would be useful to give thought to establishing an Academic forum bringing together

government, industry and academia for regular exchange of views on these issues. Such bodies have a good record in the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr Chairman,

With the Seventh Review Conference to be held in 2011, the substantive preparations for it to be a success should start now. Real practical measures to strengthen the role of the BWC as a reliable barrier against the development, production and use of biological and toxin weapons are to be identified. We have no doubt that in doing so one must make the full use of the valuable experience accumulated in the past by VEREX and the Ad Hoc Group. However, seven years have elapsed since the suspension of multilateral negotiations to develop a legally binding instrument of verification. All this time scientific knowledge has been rapidly advancing. If the future verification mechanism is to encompass all relevant S&T, then this work, vitally important for the success of the Convention, ought to be resumed at the earliest. The emerging favourable environment may encourage us as we make this new attempt.

We are aware of the still circulating opinion that the BWC is inherently unverifiable, and the adoption of an ineffectual verification protocol will create a false sense of security without solving the problem of monitoring compliance. One may recall that the same objection had been raised in the past regarding the Chemical Weapons Convention, which, in the assessment of all its States Parties, possessing powerful verification provisions successfully faces the challenges of the prohibition of chemical weapons. It is understandable that verification in multilateral arms control and disarmament may not fully guarantee compliance. However, it is difficult to deny that these verifiable treaties and conventions are the cornerstones of international security and ensure predictability, stability and strengthen confidence among participating nations. We are convinced that the BWC with verification is better off than without it. It is our firm belief that the effective non-discriminatory verification mechanism is feasible and as such should be developed and adopted.

Mr Chairman,

The continuing growth in the number of the States Parties to this Convention is a positive development. We welcome nations that joined in 2008: Zambia, Madagascar and the United Arab Emirates. A lot remains to be done to achieve complete universality of the Convention. The States Parties should view this as a priority. A special role in this endeavor belongs to the Chairman of intersessional meetings, and we look forward to the presentation of the Chairman's report on universalisation.

In conclusion, let me say a few words about the work of the ISU that was established by us at the Sixth Review Conference. We are satisfied with it; effective organization of intersessional meetings is beyond dispute the achievement of our compact but productive staff. The website maintained by the ISU has become a functional resource containing useful information relating to the BWC meetings. Our proposal is to continue developing the website by filling it with valuable documents produced by VEREX and the Ad Hoc Group. These documents are already partially presented electronically on the Internet, so moving them to the ISU's website may not be problematic financially or technically.

Mr Chairman,

The Russian delegation is ready for constructive discussion and meaningful interaction with all delegations in the interests of addressing the issues on our agenda.

Thank you.