

Biological Weapons Convention – 2008 Meeting of States Parties
Geneva, 1-5 December 2008

Monday, 1 December (p.m.), Room XVII

TRANSCRIPT

PLENARY

LIBYA [from interpretation]: Chairman, I would first of all like to congratulate you on your excellent management of the work of the Meetings of the States Parties to the Convention. We have no doubt that, with your exceptional experience, we will be able to crown our work with success. We would also like to commend the team working together with you for their dedication.

The delegation of Libya acknowledges that its participation in activities of the States Parties and at the Review Conferences in the past under this Convention has enabled us to gather information which is very useful and extensive. This has also given us an opportunity to get in touch with delegations that attended States Parties' meetings and meetings here in Geneva. All of this has made it possible for us to build up a store of information that forms the basis of our work to strengthen the Convention. This has also enabled us to build our capacity with a view to adopting national legislation and put forward laws to promote the Convention. We are among those countries that are attached to the provisions of the Convention.

To ensure enforcement and universality of the Convention, the States Parties and the Secretariat of the Convention must assist developing countries to emerge from their crisis which is due to the spread of disease and epidemics and they must help those countries acquire the necessary experience and technical know-how to manage biological activities. We hope that these countries will enjoy the necessary support and will be able to attend the Expert Meetings and the States Parties' meetings to the Convention.

Libya has appointed a National Committee for Biosafety and Biological Ethics as a focal point. This Committee works together with other research centres, such as the Centre for the Fight against Epidemics and Endemic Diseases, the Centre for Animal health, the Centre for Food and Medicine Oversight, and the Biotechnology Research Centre, among other institutes. We are seeking to coordinate the activities of all of these bodies for the purpose of improving biosafety and biosecurity by checking food imports for pathogens that may be a public health hazard.

In addition, we are seeking to cooperate with a number of international and regional organizations and with other friendly countries. As an illustration, we are cooperating with UNESCO. In this area, we have a programme under way following the Tripoli Declaration. This programme provides training opportunities in African countries in the following fields: training with regard to vegetable tissue culture, gene therapy for AIDS sufferers, early screening for cancer, and detection of microorganisms in foods. We also send samples to the OIE to ensure that there is no trace of pathogens such as bird flu. In addition, we are cooperating in the area of contagious diseases. The US Navy and the WHO, the FAO, the US Health Authorities, and the UK Health Agency, among other organizations, are just a few of those that we are cooperating with.

Recently, we joined the International Centre for Genetic Engineering in Rome. I can say that the accession instruments were deposited in June 2008. These instruments of accession came into force for Libya on 30 July 2008. We have taken the necessary steps to establish contact with the Centre so as to plan scientific activities and research.

We encourage biologists to take a lead role in implementing the Convention. This is why my country has proposed a number of draft Codes of Conduct. First of all, we have proposed a Code of Conduct for the handling of very dangerous microorganisms and we have put forward a list of those microorganisms, some of which cause serious health problems, to humans, animals and plants. We have also proposed a Code of Conduct for implementing an early warning system for the spread of diseases. We have proposed a revised Health Law (106 of 1973) and we are also proposing to amend other national laws. We are seeking to consolidate national laws with regard to dangerous microorganisms, as well as toxins, biological waste and other threats. We are putting forward a bill which will seek to limit the trade in genetically modified organisms. We are putting forward a bill setting out a Code of Conduct for doctors in Libya and also a bill for pharmacists, a Code of Conduct, and, in addition, a Code of Conduct for laboratory workers and the food industry.

We have set up a working group tasked with studying a bill to protect plant medicines from scientific theft in Libya and we are seeking to provide a copyright framework for these substances. We are also seeking to introduce a law that penalizes phytotherapists who practise without licence. We are also focusing on a law for the handling of GMOs for research and commercial purposes. There is also an animal protection law involving veterinary quarantine and animal health in keeping with the Convention provisions.

We wish this meeting every success and we hope that we will further be principals of the [a few words missing at end of record and beginning of next] .. universal.