

**7th BTWC Review Conference
(Geneva, 5-22 December 2011)**

Statement on behalf of the European Union

Mr President,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro¹ and Iceland^{**2}, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Serbia as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this declaration.

2. At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr Chairman, for the way you have opened this Seventh Review Conference, and all the consultative work you have done in preparation for this important event. The European Union shares your motto. We need to be ambitious, yet we should not lose ground with reality, with what is concretely achievable at this important stage in the life of BTWC. I would also like to thank the Implementation Support Unit, for the excellent work carried on in preparations for this conference.

Mr President,

3. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems remains one of the greatest threats to international peace and security. Under the EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction adopted by the EU Heads of State and Government in 2003, the European Union is addressing this threat on the basis of three principles: effective multilateralism, prevention and cooperation.

4. The European Union strongly supports all multilateral instruments devoted to disarmament and non-proliferation, including the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). The BTWC is a cornerstone of international efforts to prevent biological agents or toxins from ever being developed and used as weapons and constitutes a key element of our collective security.

5. The EU has arrived at this Conference with a strong common position. This document constitutes the overall framework of our view on the subject matter and which the EU endorsed last 18 July. Our common position sets out clear objectives, definite priorities, and concrete proposals.

6. The EU's objectives are realistic and ambitious at the same time: together with all State

¹ **Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

² ***Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.*

Parties, we want to review the operations of the BTWC and to explore concrete options to strengthen it further. The EU has identified three priorities for reviewing the BTWC: **building confidence in compliance, supporting national implementation, and promoting universalisation.**

Mr President,

7. State Parties should be able to demonstrate compliance by means of information exchange and enhanced transparency about their implementation activities and intentions towards compliance. This can be achieved by means of declarations, consultations and on-site activities, representing increasing levels of transparency and scrutiny, but also by information exchange and review during the intersessional process. While recognising that there is currently no consensus on the issue of verification, which remains a central element of a complete and effective disarmament and non proliferation regime, we are willing to work towards identifying options that could achieve similar goals.

8. Confidence Building Measures are crucial tools with regard to creating confidence in compliance. The CBMs are the politically agreed regular national declaration tool on implementation and compliance. They should be modified in order to try to increase participation in CBMs submissions. The European Union deems important, to reduce to the largest extent possible the complexity of CBM forms and to remove potential ambiguities. The relevance and comprehensiveness of the CBMs can be increased by making information exchange possible about all relevant BTWC activities, taking into careful account the need to achieve an appropriate balance between providing useful information and the effort required to obtain it. In this regard, the outcome of the Geneva Forum Workshops could serve as a useful basis for the modification of the CBMs forms. Modifying CBM could be done via a possible two-step approach, the modifications that would need further examination being left to a new intersessional process. The Union believes the ISU can play a greater role in supporting the national points of contact and the national authorities responsible for ensuring compliance. This support could include elements such as setting up a CBM reference library, a 'helpdesk'-function, providing the CBM forms in several languages, introducing an electronic format, and organizing regional seminars for assisting national points of contact. Without prejudice to any discussion at this review conference about the implementation of article X, the EU is in favour of integrating information exchange about cooperation and assistance, into the CBM mechanism, using the current form D or creating a new form.

9. Also with regard to compliance the EU is also in favour of strengthening the UN Secretary-General's mechanism for investigation of alleged use of biological and toxin weapons. Further action could be considered and decisions taken on the provision of assistance and coordination in the context of Article VII of the BTWC with relevant organisations upon request by any State Party in the case of alleged use of biological and toxin weapons, including improving national capabilities for disease surveillance, detection and diagnosis and public health systems. Work done in support of the UN Secretary-General's mechanism for investigation of alleged use of biological and toxin weapons will contribute indirectly to strengthen Articles VI and VII of the BTWC.

10. On national implementation our common aim should be supporting and strengthening, where necessary, national enforcement measures, including criminal legislation, biosafety and biosecurity measures in life science institutions, control over pathogenic micro-organisms and toxins, export control for dual-use agents and technologies, the appointment of a national contact

point for the BTWC, and regional and international cooperation, also with the WHO, OIE, FAO, and other international organizations and initiatives such as the G8 Global Partnership. Implementation of appropriate biosafety and biosecurity management standards for laboratories and industry as well as awareness raising among scientists regarding risks of developments in science and technology should include involvement of academia and industry. The participation of representatives from both academia and industry could be part of a new intersessional process. In order to support national implementation, the capacity of the Implementation Support Unit should be strengthened and the issues should be taken up as an intersessional topic. Further action could entail coordination among national stakeholders and regional and sub-regional cooperation

11. We need to strive for universal adherence of all States to the BTWC, including calling on all States not party to the BTWC to adhere to it without further delay and to commit legally to the disarmament and non-proliferation of biological and toxin weapons; and, pending adherence of those States to the BTWC, encouraging them to participate as observers in the meetings of the State Parties and to implement, on a voluntary basis, the provisions of the BTWC. In working towards the ban on biological and toxin weapons being declared a universally binding Rule of International Law, the EU calls upon State Parties to improve and coordinate their outreach activities for achieving universalisation of the BTWC; and therefore recommends the adoption of an action plan on universalisation evaluated during dedicated sessions during the intersessional process, and, if necessary, modified at each State Parties' Meeting.

12. The European Union will continue to support the concrete implementation of Article X of the BTWC and is willing to continue the elaboration of common understandings, which forms the basis for effective action with regard to cooperation for peaceful purposes in the framework of the BTWC. To demonstrate its commitment to the implementation of Article X the EU organized seminars, among others, in Lima and Belgrade and has published a working paper containing information from EU institutions and EU members about cooperation and assistance activities related with Art. X, i.e. examples and figures about exchange in biological sciences and technology for peaceful purposes and projects for capacity building in the fields of disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis, and containment of infectious diseases. The European Union considers important the exchange of information among State Parties about activities concerning cooperation and assistance. In this regard, we would favour integrating information related to assistance in the CBMs by revising Form D or creating a new form, and mandating the ISU to compile Article X of the BTWC related information into an online database, which could be on the restricted area of the website.

Mr President,

13. The European Union is also convinced that a process of more frequent assessments of relevant scientific and technological developments, which may have implications for the BTWC, such as in the rapidly developing fields of synthetic biology and nanotechnology and the increasing convergence of chemistry and biology is of the utmost importance. The ISU's mandate, whose prolongation for another five years should be guaranteed, should also include the establishment of a communication and information platform on policy, scientific and other activities relevant to the BTWC. A working group could be established for S and T assessments during the intersessional process. Furthermore, science and technology items could be included on the agenda of Meetings of State Parties.

14. Equally important is for State Parties to comply with the obligations under UN Security Council Resolutions 1540 (2004), 1673 (2006), 1810 (2008), and 1977 (2011), in particular to

eliminate the risk of biological and toxin weapons being acquired or used for terrorist purposes, including possible terrorist access to materials, equipment, and knowledge that could be used in the development and production of biological and toxin weapons.

Mr President,

15. The proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction is recognised as a global challenge to which the International Community can successfully respond. A fruitful Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention Review Conference leading to a programme of concrete national, regional and international actions will demonstrate that the international disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control community is able to effectively respond to the challenges of today's world.

Thank you, Mr President
