General Exchange of Views

Mr. Chairman,

I congratulate you on your election and appreciate the commendable manner in which you are conducting your work as President-designate of the BWC’s Eighth Review Conference. We are confident of making substantive progress under your able leadership. You can count on my delegation’s full cooperation. We will be pleased to support you as one of the Vice-Presidents of the forthcoming Review Conference.

We also appreciate the work done by the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) with its modest resources and staff.

Pakistan associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of NAM States Parties to the BWC. We have a few additional remarks.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan ratified the BWC in 1974 as a non-possessor State. We remain committed to its full and effective implementation. BWC is the first multilateral disarmament treaty banning an entire category of weapons. We deeply value its contribution to global security. This aspect of the BWC needs to be preserved and strengthened.

Pakistan shares the concerns regarding the possible use of biological weapons including by non-State actors. Our top priorities, therefore, should include the universalization of the Convention and its effective and balanced implementation.

Pakistan believes that the most credible and sustainable method of strengthening the Convention is through multilateral negotiations aimed at concluding a legally binding Protocol, including on verification provisions, dealing with all the Articles of the Convention in a balanced and
comprehensive manner. Pakistan recognizes the difference of opinion among States Parties over the need for such a legally binding Protocol. In the absence of consensus on this matter, my delegation will continue to participate constructively in the discussions on the various agenda items to explore progress where consensus is possible by focusing on areas that unite us.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan participated actively and constructively in the preceding Inter-Sessional Programme (ISP) from 2012 to 2015. As mandated by the Seventh Review Conference, States Parties discussed, and promoted common understanding and effective action on three standing agenda items pertaining to: cooperation and assistance under Article-X; review of developments in the field of science and technology; and strengthening national implementation; as well as two biennial items including CBMs and Article-VII.

We attach special importance to strengthening the implementation of Article-X. We believe that there is an urgent need for States Parties to work together to develop procedures to promote full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of this Article. In this regard, Pakistan supports the NAM proposal for a mechanism on Article X implementation.

The discussions on strengthening “implementation of Article VII, including consideration of detailed procedures and mechanisms for the provision of assistance and cooperation by States Parties” during the last Inter-Sessional Programme has helped in developing a better collective understanding of this issue. We believe that it is extremely important for affected States Parties to receive timely and effective assistance, irrespective of whether the disease outbreak has occurred naturally or has been deliberately caused, covering diseases and toxins that may harm humans, animals, plants or the environment. The provision of such assistance should not be conditional on the action or finding by the UN Security Council with respect to the investigation of alleged use. Assistance should be provided promptly on the basis of the request by the affected state. This requires a detailed mechanism for catering to such requests in a timely, effective and adequate manner. Concrete and practical measures in this regard should be considered by the States Parties at the forthcoming RevCon.
Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan also values the importance of holding regular reviews of the developments in science and technology related to the Convention. These reviews should provide impetus not only to enhanced awareness regarding new technologies and risks, such as synthetic biology, but also towards enhanced cooperation and sharing of such technology for peaceful purposes. We firmly believe that the potential dual-use nature of emerging technologies in itself should not be used as a pretext for proscribing or restricting their availability to developing countries for permitted purposes.

Pakistan recalls with satisfaction the successful conclusion of the 7th BWC Review Conference in December 2011, and believes that its Final Document embodied a delicate balance that should be preserved in the Final Document of the forthcoming Eighth Review Conference. We look forward to working with you and other States Parties in developing a robust, balanced and forward looking Final Document by consensus.

We note the several concrete proposals that have been submitted by various States Parties in the form of Working Papers. Some important issues as well as some new ideas have been raised in the Working Papers. We are currently in the process of examining them, and hope that this meeting will enhance our understanding of their substance. Without prejudice to our priorities, we will give careful consideration to all proposals as we move ahead with the preparatory process.

Mr. Chairman,

The Preparatory Committee for the 7th BWC Review Conference held in 2011 had requested the preparation of certain background documents. These documents were a useful resource and ready reference, covering issues related to CBMs, national compliance, new scientific and technological developments, other international organizations, additional understandings and agreements reached by previous Review Conferences, common understandings reached by Meetings of States Parties during the Intersessional Programme, universalization, and Article-X. As raised by us during your informal consultations with NAM, we would request that the background documentation for the 8th Review Conference should also include a document on implementation of Article-VII.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.