

**Remarks by Ambassador Masood Khan, President
of the 2006 Biological Weapons Convention Review
Conference, at the event to commemorate the 40th
anniversary of the entry into force of the Biological
Weapons Convention**

Council Chamber, Palais des Nations,
Monday, 30 March 2015

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Representatives of the Depositary
States,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good Morning,

It is an honour and a great pleasure for me to be back in Geneva to join in the celebrations of the 40th anniversary of this historic treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, one that is dear to my heart.

I would like to thank my friend Ambassador Mazlan Muhammad, Chairman of the Meetings of the States Parties, and Mr. Daniel Feakes, Head of the Implementation Support Unit, for inviting me to participate in today's event.

In her remarks, High Representative Angela Kane has outlined the moral, political and legal obligations we

have, as a community, to promote the sublime cause of this regime.

I also thank Mr. Michael Moller for his presence and important statement.

Today, we commemorate a historic watershed in human history. We can all be proud of the contribution of the Biological Weapons Convention in over 40 years to make the world a safer place, and to the cause of multilateralism and disarmament.

We are all committed that the life sciences will be used only for benign purposes, and that we will continue to fight present and future threats of their destructive use, biological warfare and bioterrorism.

The Convention has been remarkably successful in its mission of eliminating an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. It is a simple treaty and it has some shortcomings. But, over the decades, it has built a robust norm against the repugnant notion of using disease as a means of warfare. Although membership of the BWC is not yet universal, no state claims today that biological weapons are a legitimate means of national defense.

This is in marked contrast to the situation in the 1950s and the 1960s.

This is a testimony to the often-underestimated power and influence of multilateralism and international law.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the BWC is the most successful WMD non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

While celebrating this success, we must bear in mind two points.

First, the success of the BWC does not derive from simply getting states to sign and ratify it. The regime is much more than a few pages of the text.

Second, if we want to build upon the success of the BWC, we have to meet some important challenges ahead.

It was realized very early in the history of the BWC that the treaty in itself would not be sufficient to erect barriers against biological weapons. The lack of verification provisions, coupled with suspicions of cheating and concerns about the implications of scientific and technological advances, led States Parties to begin discussing how the convention might be strengthened – a debate which continues to this day.

This debate is fundamental to the success of the treaty that we are celebrating today. The community of BWC

States Parties – with all its differences – is the very lifeblood of the treaty. It has collectively evolved norms and mechanisms that ensure that the advances in the life sciences, biology and biotechnology are used *only* for the benefit of humanity.

My own engagement with this community began when I presided over the Sixth Review Conference in 2006. It was a particularly difficult time: feelings were still raw after the collapse of the protocol negotiations and the stark divisions of the Fifth Review Conference held in 2001. And yet, the BWC community was already demonstrating its resilience and resolve. The first inter-sessional process had revealed that, for all their differences, States Parties were committed to making the convention work; and finding pragmatic ways to do it.

When I started preparations in December 2005, member states were still in a deep quagmire of acrimony and divisions. Recriminations and stand-offs cast their dark shadow on the BWC negotiations.

In 2006, working together we turned that around. With sheer determination and a sense of purpose we set the convention back on course and made the review conference a success.

We found creative ways to accommodate or steer around the serious divisions among States Parties, and agreed on innovative and practical outcomes. We created an environment for engagement and results.

The establishment of the Implementation Support Unit was a major step forward for the BWC, one that has made a difference in improving effectiveness of the treaty, at a very modest financial cost.

I want to place on record the outstanding work done by Mr. Richard Lennane, the first head of the ISU, to make the BWC a successful regime by giving it strong professional and institutional support. And I also recognize the work done by Piers Millet and Ngoc Phuong van der Blij. Also my tribute to predecessor, Ambassador Tibor Toth, and my successor, Ambassador Paul van der Ijssel for their leadership of the 5th and the 7th Review Conferences, respectively.

We also were successful in creating synergies between the BWC, OPCW, the UN, WHO, FAO, and OIE; and between the BWC member states, industry and academic institutions.

Our motto was *'From adjacency to synergy.* We succeeded in promoting that goal.

The renewed inter-sessional process brought in a wide range of actors from outside the traditional security and arms control communities, and built vital links with public health and scientific organizations, the private sector and civil society.

We also used the shoestring resources of the ISU and the Chair of the BWC meetings to accelerate the pace of ratifications. I am glad that today states parties' number stands at 173. The movement towards universality must continue.

I also congratulate the states parties on the success of the Seventh Review Conference.

This brings me to my second point: our struggle is far from over. Indeed, fulfilling the goals of the BWC is a *never-ending* and *ever-evolving* challenge. A fundamental shift in the way the BWC has been perceived has taken place over the past 15 years, with the widespread recognition that biological weapons are just one part of a spectrum of biological risks – such as naturally-occurring disease, laboratory accidents, and so on – and that this spectrum of risk must be dealt with in an integrated and coordinated way.

We cannot meet the challenges confronting the BWC regime by standing still and relying on our past successes. Biological science and technology continue

to advance at a breathtaking speed. At the same time, the global security situation evolves in unpredictable and alarming ways. Asymmetric warfare, terrorism, violent extremism and twisted ideologies have multiplied security threats in many parts of the world.

The BWC community must respond to these challenges effectively. We should continue to invest in preparedness and response to avert and manage an unforeseen hostile outbreak of disease.

It is a little worrying that within the BWC community, political differences are once again creeping up, and there appears to be a reluctance to work together constructively.

We should reverse this drift. We must generate the political will to resolve divisive issues or – more pragmatically – to work around them in the collective interest of strengthening the convention.

All States Parties agree that the Implementation Support Unit has demonstrated extraordinary performance in the past nine years. As a minuscule secretariat supporting the BWC, the ISU should not remain a poor, inadequately equipped, relative of the muscular secretariats of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

It is high time that the ISU is expanded and developed to its full potential.

Similarly, we must overcome reluctance to explore new ideas that might help deal with contentious issues such as compliance, verification and Article X. There is already a long record of States collaborating on a wide range of issues in a collegial and constructive fashion. We should now tackle some of our historical problems with an open mind and renewed entrepreneurial spirit.

We are a large and diverse family. But in the end we know where our common interests lie, and we know that the BWC is something we must treasure, respect, defend and promote.

Pakistan signed the BWC in 1972 and ratified it in 1974. We oppose development, production or stockpiling of biological weapons and agents. Over the years, Pakistan has worked diligently with other member states to strengthen the BWC regime. We have also advocated the rights of states to access biological and toxin materials and technology for research and peaceful purposes, for medicine and agriculture and industry.

Pakistan is investing in the development of the life sciences and biotechnology. We have a good institutional base, a sound infrastructure, and a pool of scientists to sustain this effort. As we do so, we have

enforced stringent biosecurity and biosafety measures and export controls.

Before I conclude, I would quote from a very incisive piece written by David Fiddler of the Council on Foreign Relations website. Mr. Fiddler calls the BWC as a model for regulating dual use cyber technologies because the treaty attempts to advance scientific progress while preventing its exploitation for hostile purposes. *Second*, the biological sciences' increasing dependence on information technologies makes cybersecurity a growing risk and, thus, a threat to BWC objectives. [Quoted verbatim]

Let us demonstrate that we can counter this emerging threat.

The international community should remain vigilant and prepared to deal with the threats of bio-terrorism, as well as deliberate or accidental releases of pathogens that can affect health, food staples and raw materials; and cause havoc.

Let us move forward with renewed determination and common purpose, to ensure that the goals of this landmark treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, continue to be realized.

Distinguished Representatives of the Depositary States, Ambassador Mazlan Mohammad and Mr. Daniel Feakes, I wish you and the BWC community success this year and in 2016.
