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**Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of
the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological
(Biological) and Toxin Weapons (BTWC) and on Their Destruction
4-8 December 2017, Geneva**
**General Statement, delivered by Dr. B.V.S.H. Beneragama, Deputy
Director General of Health Services**

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, let me join others in congratulating you on your appointment as the President of the Meeting of States Parties to the BTWC this year, and appreciate the extensive consultations conducted in preparation for this meeting. We extend a warm welcome to Samoa as the newly joined 179th States Party to this Meeting, and hope that other States will also follow by joining the Convention realizing the universalization objective.

Mr. Chairman,

Being the first multilateral treaty to ban an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, the BTWC within the past 40 years has established a strong norm against biological weapons.

Sri Lanka attaches greater importance to the Convention and its objectives, and has taken a number of initiatives for its implementation at the domestic level, such as introduction of guidelines and biosafety manuals in dealing with hazardous agents, training of staff, awareness raising etc. Also Sri Lanka has developed a national strategic plan on Antimicrobial resistance under 'One Health' concept and is in the process of implementation. External Review of International Health Regulations were carried out this year and measures are being taken to strengthen in the areas identified as not optimal.

We have also identified areas in which improvements are required for the full implementation of the Convention. While a number of regulations addresses some aspects of the Convention, the need for comprehensive **legislation** on the Convention is imperative, and in this context Sri Lanka remains ready to learn from other State Parties. Sri Lanka also would welcome assistance in **strengthening the national capacity**, including in training and capacity building, as well as in upgrading the laboratories and related research, to ensure that the country is equipped with capabilities to survey, detect, diagnose and combat infectious diseases as well as other possible biological threats undermining peace and security.

Mr. Chairman,

We are grateful for the opportunities provided for Sri Lanka to attend the workshop held in New Delhi last year, as well as the generous support of Australia, Canada, Germany and India for the **Sponsorship Programme**, which has enabled the participation of an expert from Capital in this Meeting. Such opportunities have enabled our participants to gain a wide understanding on the implementation of the Convention, as well as to establish networks for future cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

On the implementation of the Convention, we note that the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) are considered as an important tool to promote transparency. Nevertheless, we are mindful that CBMs alone does not provide collective assurance as to all provisions of the Convention being fully realized by all State Parties. While being cognizant of different views with regard to a multilateral agreement on a mechanism for verification of compliance with the Convention, Sri Lanka shares the wide spread interest among the State Parties to strengthen the full implementation of the Convention, including through the **negotiation and conclusion of a Protocol** covering all provisions of the Convention.

While States work towards such an agreement, we see merits in utilizing the BTWC platform to carry out other parallel interim measures, to strengthen

the Convention. As the Convention is not limited to addressing the issues of biological and toxin weapons, but also encompasses the dual –use nature and potential benefits which the technologies surrounding this issue could result in, Sri Lanka attaches great interest on **Article X** of the Convention. Full and effective implementation of Article X could generate equitable benefits for State parties, in particular developing countries, and calls upon all States Parties to contribute in this regard.

Review of new scientific and technological developments in the field of life sciences and other areas relevant to the Convention, under **Article XII** is also an important element. Article XII reviews could enable State Parties to keep abreast of such advancements, assess related threats, and respond accordingly to preserve the objectives of the Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

We consider that, with little more efforts, understanding and flexibility the eight review conference could have reach consensus on a comprehensive programme for the next intersessional period. State Parties' collective agreement on measures for practical implementation, is vital for the maintenance of the relevance of the Convention to the contemporary challenges. Therefore, Sri Lanka notes that the priority of the current meeting is to agree on an **Intersessional Process** (ISP), with a comprehensive programme, addressing all interlinked elements of the Convention. In this regard, we take note of the various proposals that have been presented, and I assure you our delegations full support in the deliberations this week to agree on an ISP acceptable to all delegations.

In conclusion, Sri Lanka wishes to re-iterate its commitment to the BTWC and to work towards strengthening national capacities in cooperation with other stakeholder for full and effective implementation of the Convention. Mr. Chairman, we are confident that with your able leadership, the meeting could agree on a forward looking consensus outcome, overcoming the divisions observed at the last Review Conference. Thank you.