

REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE
DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCTION AND STOCKPILING
OF BACTERIOLOGICAL (BIOLOGICAL) AND
TOXIN WEAPONS AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 3 March 1980, at 3 p.m.

Acting President: Mr. MARTEINSON (Assistant Secretary-General,
Chief, United Nations Centre
for Disarmament)

President: Mr. VAERNØ (Norway)

CONTENTS

Opening of the Conference
Election of the President
Adoption of the agenda
Submission of the final report of the Preparatory Committee
Adoption of the rules of procedure
Election of Vice-Presidents of the Conference and Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen
of the Drafting Committee and the Credentials Committee
Credentials of representatives to the Conference
(a) Appointment of the Credentials Committee
Confirmation of the nomination of the Secretary-General
Programme of work

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE (item 1 of the provisional agenda) (BWC/CONF.I/1)

1. The ACTING PRESIDENT declared open the Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. The provisional agenda for the Conference provided for the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee to open the Conference. However, Mr. Harry Jay, the former Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, had assumed other important responsibilities and could not be present. He (the Acting President) was honoured to open the Conference on Mr. Jay's behalf.
2. On the proposal of the Acting President, the participants observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.
3. The Acting President, in his capacity as representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, read out the following message addressed by the Secretary-General to the Review Conference:

"It gives me great pleasure to extend my greetings and best wishes to all delegations participating in the Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. This important Conference is being held at the beginning of the Second Disarmament Decade, which should mark a new stage in the long and difficult road towards disarmament. The fact that the world is faced at present with international tensions and an acceleration of the arms race is all the more reason for us to use every opportunity to invigorate the disarmament process.

"The Biological Weapons Convention occupies a special place in the field of disarmament. In providing for an undertaking by States parties to prohibit and prevent the development, production, stockpiling, acquisition or retention of a whole category of weapons of mass destruction, the Convention represents the first disarmament effort in recent years by the United Nations by which one of the dangerous avenues of the arms race has been closed.

"The significance of the Convention comes into sharper focus when one considers that the unceasing progress in science and technology often leads to the development and production of newer and more dangerous weapons. The arresting of this ominous trend at least in one area is an achievement that resulted from long but persevering efforts of the whole international community. It proves the importance of similar efforts in other areas of disarmament.

"Another positive aspect of the Convention is the provision in its article IX that States parties should continue negotiations in good faith with a view to reaching early agreement on effective measures for the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and on their destruction. Numerous decisions of the General Assembly have unequivocally accorded high priority to the prohibition of all chemical weapons. Negotiations to this end, therefore, need to proceed without delay.

"I trust that your participation in the work of this Conference will ensure that the purposes of the preamble and the provisions of the Convention, including those concerning negotiations on chemical weapons, are being realized and that the relevant new scientific and technological developments are fully taken into account. Over 100 States have ratified or signed the Convention, including many militarily significant countries. A thorough and forward-looking examination of the functioning of the Convention will no doubt contribute to its broader acceptance, and ultimately to its universal application.

"Your Conference has an important mandate and I wish you every success in its fulfilment."

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT (item 2 of the provisional agenda)

4. The ACTING PRESIDENT invited nominations for the office of President of the Conference.
5. Mr. VRHUNEC (Yugoslavia) nominated Mr. Vaernø (Norway).
6. Mr. ONKLINX (Belgium) and Mr. KOMIVES (Hungary) supported the nomination.
7. Mr. Vaernø (Norway) was elected President of the Conference by acclamation.
8. Mr. Vaernø (Norway) took the Chair.
9. The PRESIDENT thanked all delegations for the honour they had bestowed upon him and his country in electing him. He was especially grateful to those delegations which had nominated him for election. He would do everything possible to ensure the successful completion of the Conference's work.
10. As delegations were aware, the Conference's mandate derived originally from article XIII of the Biological Weapons Convention, which stipulated that five years after the entry into force of the Convention a conference of States parties should be held to review the operation of the Convention, with a view to ensuring that the purposes of the preamble and the provisions of the Convention, including the provisions concerning negotiations on chemical weapons, were being realized. The review should also take into account any new scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention.

11. The General Assembly had noted in resolution 33/59 B that after appropriate consultations a Preparatory Committee of the parties to the Convention was to be arranged. In accordance with that provision, that Committee had held a session from 9 to 18 July 1979. On behalf of all delegations, he extended thanks to the members of the Committee for their efforts and, in particular, to Mr. Jay of Canada for his work as Chairman of the Committee. The Committee's report was to be found in document BWC/CONF.I/3.

12. The distinguishing feature of the Convention lay in the fact that it was a genuine disarmament measure and that, in one important area at least, the possibility of an arms race had been effectively eliminated. It was encouraging to note that the knowledge available in that particular field had, as a consequence, been channelled towards peaceful activities of potential benefit to mankind.

13. It was now incumbent upon the international community to expand the opportunities for further advance in the field of disarmament arising from the Convention. In that context, he drew attention to the obligations laid down in article IX of the Convention, which affirmed that the recognized objective of all parties to the Convention was the effective prohibition of chemical weapons. In saying that, he looked forward to the day when the commitments listed in that part of the Convention would be fulfilled by all nations which had ratified it, he was surely speaking for the world community as a whole. In that connexion, he drew attention to article 75 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, in which it was agreed, inter alia, that complete and effective prohibition of chemical weapons was one of the most urgent tasks in multilateral negotiations.

14. The Conference should be seen in a wider context as part of an ongoing process of co-operation to secure a safer world. There was no alternative to the continuation of that process, to which the Conference would, he hoped, make its contribution. All delegates would doubtless agree that it was particularly important to keep that in mind in the present international situation.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (item 3 of the provisional agenda) (BWC/CONF.I/1)

15. The agenda was adopted.

SUBMISSION OF THE FINAL REPORT OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE (agenda item 4)
(BWC/CONF.I/3)

16. The PRESIDENT suggested that the Conference should take note of the Preparatory Committee's final report.

17. It was so decided.

ADOPTION OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE (agenda item 5) (BWC/CONF.I/2)

18. The rules of procedure were adopted.

ELECTION OF VICE-PRESIDENTS OF THE CONFERENCE AND CHAIRMEN AND VICE-CHAIRMEN OF THE DRAFTING COMMITTEE AND THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE (agenda item 6)

19. The PRESIDENT informed the Conference that consultations were still in progress and suggested that consideration of the item should be deferred until a subsequent meeting.

20. It was so decided.

CREDENTIALS OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE CONFERENCE (agenda item 7)

(a) APPOINTMENT OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

21. The PRESIDENT suggested that consideration of the item should be deferred so as to enable him to conduct the necessary consultations.

22. It was so decided.

CONFIRMATION OF THE NOMINATION OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (agenda item 8)

23. The PRESIDENT drew attention to rule 10 of the rules of procedure and to paragraph 18 of the report of the Preparatory Committee (BWC/CONF.I/3). The Secretary-General of the United Nations, in consultation with the members of the Committee, had nominated Ms. Segarra, Chief, Treaties and Resolutions Section, United Nations Centre for Disarmament, as Secretary-General of the Conference. He invited delegations to confirm that nomination.

24. It was so decided.

25. Ms. SEGARRA (Secretary-General of the Conference) thanked the President and the participants in the Conference for the confidence they had placed in her and assured them that, with the able assistance of her colleagues in the Secretariat, she would do her utmost to facilitate the work of the Conference and perform the duties required of the Secretariat with diligence and competence.

PROGRAMME OF WORK (agenda item 9)

26. The PRESIDENT suggested that, in accordance with the practice followed by previous international conferences, the General Committee which would be created as a result of the allocation of the vice-presidencies should be invited to consider the question of the programme of work of the Conference and to submit recommendations.

27. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.

