SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 9 September 1991, at 3 p.m.

Temporary President: Mr. AKASHI (Under-Secretary-General, Department for Disarmament Affairs)

President: Mr. GARCIA MORITAN (Argentina)

CONTENTS

Opening of the Conference by the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee

Submission of the final report of the Preparatory Committee

Election of the President

Message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations

Adoption of the agenda

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this Conference will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the Conference.

CONTENTS (continued)

Adoption of the rules of procedure

Confirmation of the nomination of the Secretary-General

Election of the Vice-Presidents of the Conference and Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Committee of the Whole, the Drafting Committee and the Credentials Committee

Credentials of representatives to the Conference

(a) Appointment of the Credentials Committee
The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE (item 1 of the provisional agenda)

SUBMISSION OF THE FINAL REPORT OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE (item 4 of the provisional agenda) (BWC/CONF.III/1)

1. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT suggested that items 1 and 4 of the provisional agenda (BWC/CONF.III/1, annex 1) should be considered together.

2. It was so decided.

Mr. GARCIA MORITAN (Argentina), Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, declared open the Third 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 and welcomed all delegations participating in the Conference.

4. Introducing the report of the Preparatory Committee (BWC/CONF.III/1), he noted with satisfaction that the Committee’s decisions and recommendations had been adopted by consensus thanks to the spirit of goodwill and cooperation displayed by the participants. Particular thanks were due to the Vice-Chairmen of the Committee and the group coordinators. He also wished to express appreciation of the assistance the Secretary-General had given to the Committee and of the effective cooperation received from the Secretary-General’s Special Representative and his staff.

5. Drawing attention to the other documentation before the Conference, prepared in accordance with the decisions of the Preparatory Committee, he explained that, owing to delays in the submission of material by States Parties, not all documents were as yet available in all the official languages of the Conference.

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

6. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT drew attention to paragraph 3 of the report of the Preparatory Committee which stated that, after intensive consultations during the session, the understanding had been reached that the representative of Argentina, nominated by the Group of Non-Aligned and Other States, would preside over the Third Review Conference. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Conference wished to elect Mr. Garcia Moritán (Argentina) to the office of President of the Conference.

7. Mr. Garcia Moritán (Argentina) was elected President by acclamation.

8. The PRESIDENT said that it was a great honour and responsibility for the Argentine delegation to preside over the Conference, which was taking place in an international climate where the process of change and evolution was continuing steadily away from confrontation and towards cooperation. At the time of the Second Review Conference, the process had barely begun, a fact which had undoubtedly affected that Conference’s work. Nevertheless, under the skilful leadership
of Mr. Lang of Austria, the Second Review Conference had been able to rise above the constraints of a sterile debate and tackle the task of a serious review culminating in the unequivocal reaffirmation of the commitments under the Convention. Moreover, a set of confidence-building measures under article V had been considered with a view to avoiding and reducing any possible ambiguities, doubts or suspicions that might arise in connection with the Convention's implementation and to strengthening international cooperation in the field of biological activities for peaceful purposes. In that connection, he wished to stress the valuable collaboration of the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

9. In the light of the new prospects and possibilities offered by the current world situation, the objectives of the Third Review Conference might be somewhat different. In the first place, as part of a separate process which was nevertheless closely related to the issue of biological warfare, the Conference on Disarmament had entered upon the final phase of negotiations on the long-awaited chemical weapons convention, whose conclusion, possibly in 1992, would complete the set of international instruments that had begun with the Geneva Protocol of 1925 and to which the Convention on Biological Weapons had been added in 1972. Thus the work of the Third Review Conference would be taking place against the backdrop of a nearly complete legal framework.

10. In accordance with the mandate received from the General Assembly in its resolution 45/57 B, the Conference had to consider to what extent the process with regard to confidence-building measures decided upon in 1986 and 1987, and the Convention as a whole, had been implemented and to what extent the text of the Convention met the requirements of the States Parties in the current international environment.

11. It gave him particular pleasure to be responsible for conducting the process of review and reflection with regard to an international instrument which, far from losing any of its relevance, seemed to arouse ever-greater interest on the part of the international community, as witnessed by the large and growing number of States Parties. Over the past few months, State activities in the area covered by the Convention had multiplied, as had those of scholars and members of the public at large. In that connection, he wished to stress the importance of the work done, especially over the previous year, by the many non-governmental organizations which devoted considerable effort and resources to following up the Convention and educating and informing international public opinion through various meetings, workshops and publications.

12. As for the Convention itself, a large number of suggestions designed to strengthen it had been made informally, and many of them would undoubtedly be considered during the Conference. Some of them, concerning verification and the institutional structures surrounding the Convention, were aimed at reinforcing and revitalizing the instrument and providing it with the means required for its most effective application and for the continuity best suited to a treaty of vital importance to the common security of all nations.

13. The entire set of problems connected with progress in the field of genetic engineering and their relevance within the context of the Convention, as well as matters pertaining to international cooperation in the field of bioscience, would also have to be addressed in order to promote the economic and social development and scientific and technological advancement of the developing countries.
14. The international situation, favourable as it was from the strict point of view of security, should also allow the Conference to advance with far greater resolution in the field of cooperation, which, thanks to the efforts of the international biological community, might well prove no less effective than verification in strengthening universal security.

15. The Presidency would spare no effort in its search to find common ground that would enable the Conference, at the end of the current exercise, to adopt a final document declaring that the States Parties to the Convention regarded that instrument as a commitment with a clearly defined projection into the future.

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

16. The PRESIDENT invited the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to make a statement on behalf of the Secretary-General.

17. Mr. AKASHI (Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs) read out the following message to the Review Conference from the Secretary-General:

"It is with great pleasure that I extend warm greetings and best wishes to all delegations participating in the Third 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.

In my message to the Second Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention five years ago, I stated that >unless agreements are evolved in the not too distant future for proceeding with genuine arms limitation and disarmament, the arms race will continue to imperil peace and jeopardize the future of the global community=. I welcome the important achievements that have been made in this domain since then and I am encouraged by the positive and constructive spirit that increasingly characterizes disarmament-related discussions and negotiations in various fora.

I am particularly aware of the fact that, especially after the Gulf crisis, there has been a perceptible upsurge in demands by Governments and world public opinion for urgent and effective measures to be taken to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and, as a priority goal in this regard, to eliminate biological and chemical warfare agents.

In that context, I welcome the historic agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union aimed at placing substantially lower limits on their strategic nuclear arsenals and the announced intention of the two parties to continue the process of the reduction of their arsenals of such weapons. I also welcome the proposals and other initiatives by States aimed at facilitating early agreement on an effective, comprehensive and verifiable multilateral accord on chemical weapons and at strengthening the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention.
When the Convention was first opened for signature a little under 20 years ago, it was aptly hailed as the world’s first genuine disarmament treaty because it was the first and, so far, remains the only multilateral legally-binding instrument by which States Parties have undertaken not only to prohibit and prevent the development, production and stockpiling of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction but also, perhaps most importantly, to destroy them or convert them to peaceful purposes. The Convention was therefore seen as a pace-setting regime that would serve as a guide for future disarmament agreements covering other types of weapons.

The First and Second Review Conferences made an important contribution towards strengthening the authority of the Convention and enhancing confidence in the implementation of its provisions. At the Second Review Conference, in particular, States Parties agreed on a number of specific measures to prevent or reduce the occurrence of ambiguities, doubts or suspicions and to improve international cooperation in the field of peaceful bacteriological (biological) activities. This demonstrated not only renewed commitment on the part of the States Parties to continue to strengthen the Convention but also their continued recognition and appreciation of its relevance and value as a shield against the development, production, stockpiling and use of biological weapons.

There is no doubt that, especially in our increasingly interdependent world, universal adherence to the Convention would help strengthen its effectiveness and contribute to enhancing international confidence, peace and security. It is therefore encouraging that adherence to the Convention has continued to grow since the Second Review Conference, bringing the total number of States Parties so far to 118.

The Third Review Conference offers a valuable opportunity to address a whole gamut of issues relevant to the objective of strengthening the authority of the Biological Weapons Convention. Besides focusing on realizing the purposes of the preamble and the provisions of the Convention, the Conference is also called upon to take into account in its deliberations new scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention.

As efforts continue to try to improve the quality of life for people everywhere, especially in the developing countries, it can be expected that the exploitation of science and technology will increasingly constitute a vital component of such efforts. It is essential in this regard to ensure that, on the one hand, the Convention is implemented in a manner that does not hamper the economic and technological development of States Parties, as called for in the Convention itself, and that, on the other hand, the Convention is not outpaced or its effectiveness weakened by scientific and technological advances.

As you, the distinguished representatives of States Parties to the Convention, embark on your important deliberations, you may be sure that the international community will closely follow your progress. For, apart from the intrinsic value of such conferences, the Third Review Conference should also be seen as serving a wider interest - a forum for gauging the readiness of the international community to muster the necessary political will in the collective effort for disarmament, especially in the field of weapons of mass destruction.
18. The PRESIDENT thanked the Special Representative for his statement on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (item 3 of the provisional agenda)

19. The agenda was adopted.

ADOPTION OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE (agenda item 5)

20. The PRESIDENT drew attention to the provisional rules of procedure recommended by the Preparatory Committee (BWC/CONF.III/1, annex II).

21. The rules of procedure were adopted.

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

22. The PRESIDENT noted that rule 10 of the rules of procedure provided for a Secretary-General of the Conference. In paragraph 26 of its report, the Preparatory Committee had decided to invite the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in consultation with the members of the Preparatory Committee, to nominate an official to act on behalf of the Committee as provisional Secretary-General of the Review Conference. The Secretary-General of the United Nations had nominated Mr. Sammy Kum Buo, Senior Political Affairs Officer, Department for Disarmament Affairs. In the absence of any objections, he would take it that the Conference wished to confirm Mr. Buo as Secretary-General of the Conference.

23. It was so decided.


24. The PRESIDENT said that, under rule 5 of the rules of procedure, the Conference had to elect 20 Vice-Presidents. Since consultations were still being held with regard to the respective candidates, he suggested that the appointments should be considered at a later meeting.

25. It was so agreed.

CREDENTIALS OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE CONFERENCE (agenda item 7)

(a) APPOINTMENT OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

26. The PRESIDENT said that, under rule 3 of the rules of procedure, the Conference must appoint, in addition to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Credentials Committee, five further
members of the Committee on the proposal of the President. As consultations about the respective appointments were still in progress, he suggested that consideration of the matter should be deferred to a later meeting.

27. It was so agreed.

28. The PRESIDENT reminded those delegations which had not already presented their credentials to the Secretary-General of the Conference that they should do so as soon as possible, in order that the Credentials Committee could meet at the end of the current week.

29. Referring to the question of participation in the Conference, he said that the Secretary-General had informed him that five States had deposited instruments of ratification or accession since the Preparatory Committee had met, namely, Iraq, Liechtenstein, Malaysia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Swaziland. On behalf of the participants in the Conference, he welcomed those States as States Parties to the Convention.

30. In addition, under rule 44, paragraph 1 of the rules of procedure, the Secretary-General had informed him that notification had been submitted by Egypt, Morocco, Myanmar and the Syrian Arab Republic, which he welcomed on behalf of the participants in the Conference.

31. In accordance with rule 44, subparagraph 2 (a) of the rules of procedure, any other State which, in accordance with article XIV of the Convention, had the right to become a Party thereto but which had neither signed nor ratified it might apply to the Secretary-General of the Conference for observer status, which would be accorded on the decision of the Conference. Requests for observer status had been received from Algeria, Israel and Oman; if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Conference wished to accord observer status to those three States.

32. It was so decided.

33. The PRESIDENT recalled that, according to rule 44, paragraph 4 of the rules of procedure, the specialized agencies might apply to the Secretary-General of the Conference for Observer Agency status which would be accorded on the decision of the Conference. The Secretary-General had informed him that the World Health Organization wished to participate in the Conference. If there were no observations, he would take it that the Conference wished to accord Observer Agency status to the World Health Organization.

34. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.