

PHILIPPINES

MEETING OF EXPERTS ON THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION
12 to 16 August 2013, Geneva

of Philippines
Statement by the Honorable Denis Lepatan
Charge d' Affaires, a.i.

Philippine Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva

Delivered by Minister Norahyn Jubaira-Baya

Her Excellency Judit Körömi,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

The Philippine delegation is grateful for the invitation to participate in this expert's level meeting and welcomes this opportunity to work closely with the international community in pursuing the shared objective of advancing the goals and objectives of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). The Philippines wishes to congratulate the election of Ambassador Körömi as our Chair as she brings with her a wealth of experience and proven dedication to the BWC. Our delegation would like to express its deep appreciation for the efforts of the Chair and the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) for their efforts in preparing for the Meeting and their active program of consultations over the past months. The Philippines would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) under the chairmanship of Iran to promote wider support and adherence to the BWC.

The potential misuse of biological, chemical and nuclear assets, continue to pose a grave threat to international peace and security thus the need for a harmonized response by the international community. Consistent with its commitments under UN Security Council resolution 1540, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the BWC, the Philippines has sought to strengthen its partnership with the international community in addressing chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) concerns. The Philippines is now an active member of the Nuclear Security Summit, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear terrorism and most recently, the country was accepted to the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and other Materials of Mass Destruction (GP) and has begun participating in its activities. The Philippines is in fact the first Southeast Asian country to join the GP and hopes others will follow suit.

To advance the implementation of the BWC at the regional level, the Philippines spearheaded, in partnership with Australia and the United States, the organization of a series of workshops within the framework of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) on the themes of Biological Threat Reduction, Biorisk Management, Disease Surveillance and Detection, Preparedness and Response from 2009 to 2012. The Philippines is pleased to announce on this occasion that it has partnered with the US Government in hosting the "ARF Cross-Sectoral Security Cooperation on Bio-Preparedness and Disaster Response: Inception Planning Workshop" from 3 to 5 September 2013 in Manila. The Workshop primarily aims to assist ASEAN member states in building their capacities in

bio-preparedness and disaster response pursuant to the ARF-approved Best Practices for Preparedness and Response to a Biological Event document.

The Philippines has also sought to actively engage international partners such as the European Union, UNICRI and the Council for Security Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific (CSCAP) on biosecurity and biosafety issues. The Philippines supported the efforts of CSCAP to convene a meeting for Asia-Pacific countries focusing on strategic trade controls and its relevance to the BWC.

The European Union and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Research Institute (UNICRI) have likewise partnered with the Philippine Government in promoting the CBRN Center of Excellence initiative in Southeast Asia. As the host country of the CBRN COE, the Philippines is committed to supporting capacity building in the Southeast Asian region. The Philippines would also like to express its appreciation for the assistance and contributions of academic and civil society institutions, particularly VERTIC which has been assisting the Philippines in the formulation of its BWC implementing legislation, the University of Milan for its support of the Center of Excellence on CBRN, and the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) which is collaborating with the Philippines on regional WMD research and advocacy.

The Philippines looks forward to participating in the forthcoming "Regional Workshop on the National Implementation of the BWC" being organized by the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs and Malaysian Government from 2 to 4 September 2013 as this would complement international initiatives to enhance the implementation of the BWC. The Philippines also commends the Indonesian Academy of Sciences and the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences for their joint presentation on Dual Use Research of Concern (DURC) this week.

The Philippines supports developing closer synergies of effort between the BWC and WHO communities, and appreciated the WHO's invitation to participate in the WHO Informal Consultation on Dual-Use Research of Concern in Geneva on 26-28 February 2013. The Philippine Dept. of Foreign Affairs is consulting with the WHO's regional office for the Western Pacific Region in Manila along with our other BWC stakeholders in advancing this effort.

At the national level, the Department of Health (DOH) and Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) have made significant strides in advancing the thrust of the BWC. The DOH has implemented initiatives and projects in the following functional areas:

- A. Policy Program and Development
 - National Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan;
 - Policy on National Chemical Safety Management and Toxicology (DOH Administrative Order No. 2013-2009)
 - DOH involvement in the preparation of the Strategic Approach in Chemical Management Scheme spearheaded by the University of the Philippines
 - Global Harmonized System for Chemical Labeling for the Philippines

- Organogram for the Operation Center of the DOH
- B. Enhancing Laboratory Capacity
- Finalization of the Laboratory Manual for Standards, Operations and Guidelines on Biosafety and Biosecurity, to include Risk Assessment in Laboratories;
 - Establishment of functional P3 laboratories and 5 National Reference Laboratories and 5 Sub-National Reference Laboratories for H1N1.
 - Provision of biological safety cabinets for regional and local government unit hospitals under the Health Facility Enhancement Program
 - Laboratory Program for Advanced Biosafety Officers Training (ABOT) in cooperation with UP Manila
 - Involvement of the DOH in the awareness/advocacy campaigns being conducted by the Philippine Biosafety and Biosecurity Association
- C. Surveillance
- Establishment of the Event-based Surveillance (ESR) for Biological Terrorism and other Health Events
- D. Risk Communication
- Risk Communication Plan on Biopreparedness and Biosafety
 - Risk Communication Handbook of the DOH
 - Creation of a Speaker's Bureau and identification of a DOH spokesperson to handle the media during times of disasters/events
- E. Border Control
- Standard Operating Procedure for Emergency Response in all airports for infectious disease events and pandemic incidents

Complementary to the efforts of the DOH, the Bureau of Animal Industry has been a crucial stakeholder in national efforts to counter bio-terrorism. The BAI has a Special Order that provides guidelines for personnel responsible for implementing biosecurity and biosafety measures and it is closely coordinating with the US State Department under the latter's Biosecurity Engagement Programme on an Anthrax Information Dissemination Campaign.

Madam Chair,

On the proposed agenda for the meeting of experts, the Philippines is of the view that it is of the utmost importance to foster closer collaboration and synergy between and states and international organizations such as INTERPOL, World Customs Organization, World Health Organization, World Organization for Animal Health and the

Food and Agriculture Organization as biosecurity and biosafety are cross-cutting issues that necessitate a holistic response through the strengthening of international linkages.

It is equally important that sustainable technical and financial assistance be made available to countries that lack the expertise and advanced laboratory equipment to detect higher levels of infectious pathogens as surveillance and detection are crucial in mitigating the threat of bio-terrorism.

In closing, the Philippines hopes that the Meeting of Experts would be able to further synergize on-going efforts and other related initiatives in the health and counter-terrorism sphere, thereby strengthening the capacity of regions and states in the areas of disease surveillance, diagnostics, preparedness and response.

Thank you.