



Statement delivered by H.E. Dr. Mohammad Qasim Hashemzai
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at the

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor, allow me, Mr. President, to echo the words of congratulations on your election as president of this conference and commend you for the excellent and transparent manner in which you are guiding the work of the conference.

I am honored to deliver this statement on behalf of the Government of Afghanistan at this very important 7th Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). At the outset, Afghanistan aligns itself with the statement made by His Excellency the distinguished Ambassador of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. President,

The cause of disarmament and non-proliferation which leads to international peace and security and the realization of the right to development for the benefit of humanity as a whole is of utmost importance to Afghanistan. To this end and abiding by its international obligations, Afghanistan is pursuing an honest policy of peace and friendly relations with its neighbors, other countries in the region and the wider world community.

Mr. President,

The serious harm of biological weapons is quite clear to all of us. The use of such weapons results in indiscriminate casualties among human beings, destroys animals, and damages plants and other materials. Fortunately, however, the world has awakened to these harms and has jointly taken measures to curb the use of such weapons.

Afghanistan is confronted with the scourge of terrorism in its most evil form. As is well-known, the possibility of terrorist attacks with the use of biological, chemical, radiological, nuclear and other largely explosive weapons remains a real threat to the entire world including Afghanistan. In this context, the deployment of Ammonium Nitrate by the Taliban mercenaries in Afghanistan for the purpose of bomb-making and other destructive aims, largely used against civilian populations provides a clear testimony. While officially banned from import by the Government of Afghanistan, this agent continues making its way illicitly into Afghanistan from across the border. Nonetheless, while traditionally terrorists continue to rely on conventional tactics, some continue to seek biological, chemical, radiological and nuclear capabilities.

It seems that facts on the ground indicate that terrorists, rogue states and the enemies of democracy are prepared to use deadly biological weapons of mass destruction against innocent civilians including in Afghanistan. Therefore, we call on all States Parties to the BWC to discharge their commitments vis-à-vis the Convention and refrain from supplying terrorists and non-state actors with biological weapons and toxins or the capability to use them for hostile purposes. This is also in line with the Security Council resolution 1540 of 28 April 2004. However, we strongly support the use of biological materials and toxins for peaceful purposes.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan signed the Convention on Biological Weapons (BWC) on 10 April 1972 and ratified it on 26 March 1975. It also acceded to the Geneva Protocol of 1925 on 06 December 1986 by depositing its instrument of accession with the Government of France as the depository. Nonetheless, it is opportune to mention that having signed the Convention on Chemical Weapons (CCM) on 14 January 1993, it deposited its instrument of ratification on 24 September 2003. Thus, the CCM entered into force for Afghanistan on October 24, 2003.

I must add that Afghanistan also signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) on 3 December 2008 in Oslo, Norway. Having undergone due procedures of law, the Convention was ratified by the nation's Parliament and signed into law by the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in September 2011, thus, making Afghanistan a full member to the Convention. Furthermore, on 10 November 2009 Afghanistan acceded to the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I) of 8 June 1977.

Since becoming a State Party to the Convention and notwithstanding the challenges it faces under its implementation obligations, Afghanistan has taken certain steps to implement its obligations within the framework of the Convention and comply with relevant provisions therein. The Legislative Department of the Ministry of Justice is currently finalizing draft legislations aimed at helping the country meet its obligations under the BWC. Nevertheless, a number of major challenges including lack of national capacity, absence of progressive accumulation of experience, administrative loopholes, etc. still haunt Afghanistan's efforts.

We, therefore, Mr. President, attach great importance to the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of Article X which significantly contributes to the economic and technological development of States Parties to the Convention. We, however, believe that due acknowledgment should be given to the States Parties with different levels of developments. Despite the fact that there are disparities between Developed and Developing countries, there are still further disparities between Developing and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Hence, as we encourage that the needs and capabilities of the States Parties from developing countries be heeded, we also highlight that particular consideration be accorded to the peculiarities and special

needs of the LDCs as the most marginalized and disadvantaged segment of the human family, for example in the areas of building infrastructure, development of human resources and national capacity-building. In this context, while reiterating the importance of North-South cooperation, Afghanistan lays special emphasis on South-South cooperation. In order that this is better reflected within the BWC framework, we recommend that a separate clause, where relevant, be devoted in the final declaration of this Conference to the LDCs taking into account the points elaborated above.

Mr. President,

Universalization of the Convention is very dear to Afghanistan. We regret, however, that since its inception the Convention still lacks universal adherence. We encourage all those states that have not yet done so to accede to the Convention. I avail myself of this opportunity to congratulate Burundi and Mozambique on the accession to the Convention. Nonetheless, for those countries who are States Parties to the Convention, we strongly favor the establishment of a multilateral verification mechanism.

Last but not least, Mr. President, we express our satisfaction with and deep appreciation for the work and role of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU). It is an important and effective tool supporting the States Parties at their behest. We welcome the continuation of the work of the ISU and its mandate renewed. However, we share the views, expressed earlier in this room by a number of delegations, that structural changes/expansion of the ISU, if any, should be guided by striking a balance between equitable geographical representation and maintaining its technical and professional capacity to carry out the functions as mandated to it by the Conference.

Thank you Mr. President