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**GENERAL STATEMENT BY BULGARIA AT THE BTWC SEVENTH REVIEW
CONFERENCE**

5 DECEMBER 2011

Mr. President,

Let me join previous speakers in congratulating you on your election and the preceding preparatory work, which has made possible the smooth and promising start of the proceedings of the BTWC Seventh Review Conference. I wish to assure you of the support of the Bulgarian delegation for your endeavour to lead this important forum to ambitious and realistic outcomes.

My statement is underpinned by the sound record of my country of unconditionally upholding the principles and objectives of the BTWC, and supporting the strengthening of its regime. Bulgaria was among the first countries to sign and ratify the BTWC, contributing to the entry into force of the first international instrument banning a whole category of weapons of mass destruction, which laid the cornerstone of international efforts to prohibit biological and toxin weapons. We have withdrawn reservations to the 1925 Geneva Protocol and redoubled efforts to improve our legislation and legal and enforcement framework, bringing it in line with the *acquis* of the European Union and in full compliance with our obligations, stemming from the BTWC and other international instruments, in particular, relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council. Believing in the value of enhancing transparency and building confidence, Bulgaria has contributed 23 out of 25 possible annual CBMs returns. The reinforcing of the BTWC and all other multilateral instruments devoted to disarmament and non-proliferation remains our goal and, as a member of the European Union, Bulgaria is fully committed to the EU Strategy against the Proliferation of WMD (2003) and its 2006 Joint Action and Joint Action Plan in support of the BTWC.

BTWC, which entered into force in 1975, is more relevant than ever as an instrument of collective security in a rapidly changing environment. Proliferation of WMD remains one of the greatest threats to international peace and security. Possible malicious misuse of the breakthroughs we witness in life sciences and biotechnologies and related risk of unacceptable development or use of biological and toxin weapons by States and non-state actors is a main challenge that requires joint unequivocal response through strengthening the prohibitive dimension of the BTWC and the universalisation of the Convention. At the same time, efforts to effectively preclude the acquisition and use of such weapons call for parallel enhancing of the assistance and development dimension of the BTWC and all-inclusive approaches involving the industry and academia to ensure uses for exclusively peaceful purposes and the mutual strengthening of these dimensions.

The Seventh Review Conference is an important event in making decisions on the future of the BTWC and on the further work in the third intersessional period. In this relation, as a Member State of the EU, Bulgaria wishes to state its full support to the objectives,

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priorities and concrete proposals contained in the EU common position for the Seventh Review Conference.

My delegation is looking forward to productive deliberations on the review of the BTWC operations and exploration of options to strengthen it further through building confidence in compliance, supporting national implementation and supporting universalisation.

We believe that confidence in compliance can be enhanced by means of information exchange and greater transparency through declarations, consultations and on-site activities, including making better use of the intersessional process for exchanges and review and of tools as is the ISU. I join previous speakers, who have stated that while recognizing that there is currently no consensus on the issue of verification, which remains a central element of a complete and effective disarmament regime, we could work towards pragmatic approaches, identifying options that could achieve similar goals.

On the practical side, the adoption of a new intersessional programme would help strengthen the intersessional process itself through setting up dedicated working groups to address, in particular, national implementation; universalisation; further work on CBMs; assistance and cooperation under Articles VII and X; development in science and technology. The latter issue is high on the agenda of the Seventh Review Conference and should remain so throughout the third intersessional process.

In relation to CBMs, my delegation supports the two-track approach through reaching an agreement in principle at this Review Conference and elaboration of details of the CBM-forms during the intersessional period on the basis of such mandate.

Full and effective implementation of the BTWC provisions could be further enhanced through improvement of national legal and enforcement frameworks, where necessary, including biosafety and biosecurity measures, and the BTWC regime could further benefit from an ISU assistance to States Parties and enhanced interaction with the UN Security Council resolution 1540 Committee, WHO, OIE, FAO.

Universal adherence of all States to the BTWC and to disarmament and non-proliferation of biological and toxin weapons remains key priority and we support the adoption of an action plan on universalisation, coordinated by the ISU.

We uphold the concrete implementation of Article X, elaboration of common understandings for enhancing cooperation for peaceful purposes in BTWC framework.

We see practical value and support the strengthening of the capacity of the ISU as a helpful tool to mitigate the deficit of an institutional structure.

Bulgaria supports the strengthening of the UN Secretary-General's investigative mechanism in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 42/37 and has offered a list of experts and laboratories, contributing also to the EU Plan of Action.

Mr. President,

The Seventh Review Conference provides an ample opportunity to strengthen the BTWC and its authority, and my delegation stands ready to work for successful outcomes that live up to such worthy ambition.