

Estonia

Statement by the
Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations
His Excellency Mr Jüri Seilenthal
to the Seventh Review Conference of the Convention
on the Prohibition of the Development, Production
and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin
Weapons and on their Destruction
Geneva, 6 December 2011

Mr President,

On behalf of the Estonian delegation, I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on your appointment as President of this Conference. I am confident that we will all benefit from your diplomatic skills and I would like to assure you of our full support in your efforts to make this conference a success.

Estonia fully associates itself with the statement which will be delivered by the European Union later during the conference. In addition, I would like to briefly highlight some key points on a national basis.

Mr President,

The Seventh Review Conference provides us with an opportunity to modernize and further strengthen the Convention in order to better address the changing nature of the biological weapons threat. In this respect, Estonia is dedicated to achieve progress especially in the following areas.

First, we expect the Seventh Review Conference to renew and further enhance the intersessional process. Up to the present, the intersessional meetings have enabled a rich exchange of experience among States Parties. They have promoted common understanding of the functions of the Convention and provided a valuable forum for a wide range of experts and officials from different authorities, intergovernmental agencies and international organizations. However, the process needs to evolve further. Estonia believes that the next intersessional work programme should be more action oriented and responsive to our changing world. We are therefore ready to support the creation of more flexible meeting formats and thematic working groups with the aim of covering more comprehensively the challenges this Convention confronts. Estonia will work constructively throughout the Review Conference in order to reach an agreement on it.

Mr President,

The prolongation of the mandate of the Implementation Support Unit is another priority. We have all benefited from the useful work of the ISU and I would like to take this opportunity and pay tribute to the Implementation Support Unit for the strong work they have performed in support of the Convention. We pledge our full support to renewing the ISU's mandate for a further five years and a modest expanding of the ISU, if the Review Conference will decide to extend its activities.

Mr President,

The Confidence-Building Measures continue to be the only tool that gives a degree of confidence and transparency in compliance among States Parties to the Convention. Yet, this mechanism has not been reviewed since 1991. We believe that it is high time to modernize this format. We therefore fully support the idea to discuss the improvement and further development of the Confidence-Building Measures' format. In our view, a more modern CBM mechanism would also encourage greater participation in it.

As our commitment to the CBM process, Estonia has submitted the CBM forms regularly since becoming a member of the Convention in 1993. Our CBM submissions are published on the ISU website and we encourage other states to do likewise. We also call upon States Parties who have not yet submitted their confidence-building measures to do so on a regular basis.

Mr President,

National implementation of the Convention is a pivotal point for the success of the BTWC. In this regard, I would like to reaffirm that Estonia has fully implemented all obligations resulting from the BTWC into Estonian national law. Our legislation includes relevant criminal provisions, biosafety and biosecurity measures, export control measures and enforcement and it is available on the website of the State Gazette.

In conclusion, allow me, Mr President to reiterate our will and preparedness to work persistently towards a substantial and successful outcome of the Conference.

Thank you, Mr President.