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**Statement
to the 7th Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the
Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological)
and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction**

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Mr President, Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to have the opportunity to make a statement to the meeting of the 7th Review Conference of the Biological and Toxins Weapons Convention (BTWCCW). The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) is an independent African applied policy research organisation working on peace and security issues and has offices in South Africa, Senegal, Kenya and Ethiopia.

The ISS' 'Africa's Development and the Threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction Project' (WMD Project) started in May 2007 with substantial funding from the Royal Norwegian Government and now also receives financial assistance from the British High Commission in South Africa.

The aim of this project is to identify and strengthen Africa's role in international efforts to strengthen WMD disarmament and non-proliferation in the context of Africa's developmental and security imperatives.

Africa, perhaps more than any other continent, experiences the impact of naturally occurring diseases almost daily, particularly on vulnerable populations in states where health care facilities are seldom equipped to deal effectively and efficiently with disease outbreaks. Africa is also the region where more could, and should, be done with regard to improving scientific research and diagnostic facilities and where biosafety measures remain insufficient and under-resourced.



We therefore have a direct interest in a positive outcome of this Review Conference and in future meetings of States Parties to the BTWC.

As of November 2011, 37 African countries are States Parties. African States that have signed the BTWC but have not yet ratified are: Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Liberia, Malawi, Somalia and United Republic of Tanzania. African States that are not members are: Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Guinea, Mauritania and Namibia. The Republic of South Sudan, which became independent in July 2011 resulting in the creation of Africa's 54th state will, over time, be required to accede to dozens of bilateral, multilateral and international treaties and conventions, including the BTWC.

We believe that universalisation in Africa is essential to strengthening the convention and the efforts made in this regard by the Chairpersons of successive meetings of States Parties is much appreciated. It is, however, evident that a more sustained and concentrated effort is needed by States Parties with respect to Africa. It is also important to recognise that any discussion about universalisation needs to address issues of assistance to states that may require it. International co-operation requires the attention of all States Parties. The relatively low number of ratifying states in Africa should be viewed in contrast to the near universalisation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in Africa, which is largely due to the numerous outreach activities of the OPCW. As such, this raises the need to strengthen the resources of the BTWC ISU both in terms of staffing but more importantly in terms of its ability to match expressed needs with offers of support and assistance and to monitor such relationships between co-operating states. In this way, we could increase the number of African States Parties to at least 45 by the Eighth Review Conference.

Our research clearly shows that Africans are fully conscious of the fact that the continued existence of all WMD poses a threat to peace and security and that there is a commitment to ensuring the safety and security of biological (and nuclear and other radioactive and chemical) materials. At the same time, implementing the BTWC, and in line with Article X, should not hamper economic and technological progress of the peaceful uses of biological agents, and should indeed facilitate the development of the beneficial aspects of these agents.

Africa's primary concern is the risk posed by naturally occurring infectious and other disease outbreaks particularly African viral haemorrhagic fevers - which include Ebola, Marburg, Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF), Rift Valley fever (RVF), hantavirus infection with renal syndrome, Lassa fever



and related arenaviral infections - and the public and private sector's ability to mitigate and respond to them.

The establishment, as announced by South Africa during the 2009 Meeting of States Parties to the BTWC, of the Southern African Centre for Infectious Disease Surveillance (SACIDS) should therefore be welcomed and supported by all States Parties.

SACIDS is headquartered at the Sokoine University of Agriculture, Morogoro, Tanzania and is a consortium of 25 Southern African medical and veterinary, academic and research institutions involved with infectious diseases of humans and animals (and eventually also plant health) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Tanzania.

Currently, SACIDS focuses on four areas: training a cadre of young scientists; pursuing research into climate dependent, vector-borne diseases (represented by Rift Valley fever), diseases with potential inter-species concern/spread between wildlife, livestock and humans (represented by Tuberculosis), diseases of economic importance (represented by Foot-and-mouth disease), bacterial rare diseases (represented by the Plague) and dangerous emerging diseases (represented by Viral Haemorrhagic fevers - Ebola/Marburg); the sharing of expertise and resources; and, improving the efficiency of disease alerts and surveillance.

We are also of the view that more needs to be done to facilitate the bringing together of delegates from national public health and veterinary laboratories in regional or sub-regional meetings that are aimed at fostering the safe, efficient and secure use of pathogens for human and animal health. In addition, States Parties and non-governmental organisations should be encouraged to host workshops for African delegates on concerns about dual-use research and to develop educational modules for life scientists in line with the *Final Document* of the 2006 Meeting of States Parties to the BTWC. The latter urged States Parties to promote the development of training and educational programmes for those granted access to biological agents and toxins relevant to the Convention and for those with the knowledge or capacity to modify such agents and toxins, in order to raise awareness of the risks, as well as the obligations of States Parties under the BTWC.

This 7th Review Conference provides an important opportunity to strengthen the Convention. By garnering greater political support to place the BTWC into a developmental context and highlighting the socio-economic benefits of universalisation and full implementation, it is an opportunity that should not be missed.

