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Seventh Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

5-22 December 2011

Statement by H.E. Gerard Corr, Ambassador,

Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geneva,

Mr President,

Allow me to congratulate you on your election as President of the 7th Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. I would like to thank you and your team for the manner in which this Review Conference has been organised and to thank the Implementation Support Unit for their excellent preparatory work. In particular, I would like to express appreciation for your extensive consultations with all stakeholders and take this opportunity to offer my Delegation's full support for your Presidency.

Mr President

Ireland has long been a proponent of multilateral instruments of non-proliferation and disarmament, from the Non-Proliferation Treaty to more recent instruments such as the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Advances in biological sciences and biotechnology are occurring on a daily basis, and there are many opportunities for the exploitation of such advances for peaceful purposes. However, the dual use nature of biological agents and toxins requires us to ensure that the inherent risks associated with these items are managed carefully. The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention represents the most internationally recognised instrument in the pursuit of disarmament and non-proliferation of biological and toxin weapons and is a key element of our collective security.

Ireland fully associates itself with the Common Position adopted by the European Union on 18 July setting out the EU's position on the Review Conference. Ireland also fully associates itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the EU. We are committed to working to identify and strengthen existing mechanisms so as to build confidence in compliance with the BTWC. We believe there is great merit in more frequent assessments of ongoing scientific and technological developments and to working to ensure that the Convention can keep pace with these rapid developments. This should be on the agenda for both the intersessional process and for Meetings of States Parties. We are also committed to the implementation of Article X. We have contributed to the European Union's Working Paper on assistance under

Article X and will continue to support initiatives and projects aimed at capacity building in the areas of disease detection, surveillance, diagnosis and infectious disease containment

Mr President

Ireland is also committed to promoting the universality of the Convention and we call on all those States not yet party to adhere to it without delay and, pending adherence, to apply in the interim the provisions of the BTWC.

Ireland is also committed to supporting effective national implementation. This year, Ireland demonstrated its own firm commitment to the Convention and UN Security Council Resolution 1540 through the adoption of new legislation governing the production, stockpiling and use of biological weapons which further strengthens our implementation of these instruments.

The Biological Weapons Act 2011 makes it an offence to develop, produce or use a biological agent or toxin for a hostile purpose, or to stockpile, acquire, possess, retain or transfer to another purpose a biological agent or toxin for a hostile purpose. The Act will apply where offences or prohibited acts are committed outside the State in specific circumstances – when committed on ships and aircraft registered in Ireland, or by members of the Defence Forces, citizens of Ireland or an Irish body corporate. Persons convicted of offences under the act may fines or terms of imprisonment from 12 months to life depending on the severity of the offence.

The Act strengthens Irish law in the context of the potential threat posed by non-state actors, in particular terrorist groups. I am pleased to say that the legislation received all-party support in the Oireachtas, Ireland's parliament, and has been welcomed by all sides as a significant contribution to Ireland's legal framework on Weapons of Mass Destruction. It is only right that all states review their laws from time to time to ensure that they are adequate to the threat posed and this Act is a demonstration of the Ireland's continuing commitment to ensuring that the objectives of the 1972 Convention are met.

Mr President

This Review Conference will allow us to look at the implementation of the Convention for the past five years and look to the future. I hope that this Conference will show realistic ambition, and I am confident that under your guiding hand this will be possible.

Thank you Mr President