



Statement by

H.E. Mr. Uri Rosenthal

Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

on the occasion of the
7th Review Conference of the
Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

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**Statement by The Netherlands Minister of Foreign Affairs
during the General Debate of the Seventh Review Conference
of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention**

Mr President,

1. Curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and promoting arms control and disarmament are central components of Dutch foreign policy. The proliferation of biological and other weapons of mass destruction is a major threat to international peace and stability. The threat of these weapons falling into the hands of terrorist groups, rogue states and organized criminal networks has strongly increased over the last couple of years. The interlinkage between terrorists groups and organized crime and their connection with rogue regimes is the more worrisome.
2. The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention is one of the three fundamental pillars of the international community's efforts to combat weapons of mass destruction. The Netherlands therefore attaches great importance to the convention.
3. In the 21st century, security, freedom and prosperity are strongly interdependent. That interdependence is clearly visible in the field of biological agents. On the one hand, advances in science and technology bring about cures for infectious diseases. On the other hand, research results and technological advancements can be misused for terrorist purposes.
4. The development of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention was prompted by concerns over the use of these weapons by states. But today we also have to confront the danger of biological arms falling into the hand of non-state and quasi-state actors like international terrorist groups, organized crime and rogue states. Today, we see a disturbing increase in illegal arms smuggling and links with transnational, organized crime. The danger of biological terrorism is only too real. The deliberate use in 2001 of anthrax to cause death, panic and mass disruption in the United States, has been evidence to this threat.

5. The Netherlands is therefore honored to be presiding over this Review Conference. The main aim of the Netherlands for this Seventh Review Conference is to secure a positive outcome and to further strengthen the Convention. In line with the priorities of the EU member states for this Review Conference, the Netherlands will provide its support towards
- supporting national implementation
 - enhancing compliance of the Convention and
 - promoting universality

Mr President,

6. A lot of work remains to be done. Let me stress these three points:

7. Firstly, national implementation. The level of national implementation, although generally improving, remains patchy and inconsistent. We still have no clear idea of how to respond if a biological weapon were to be used, nor any way of objectively monitoring or assessing compliance. Biological threats and risks continue to evolve, while awareness remains low and management uneven and often ineffective. Therefore, all State Parties to the Convention should focus on supporting and strengthening national enforcement measures, like creating criminal legislation and appropriate biosafety and biosecurity measures.
8. Secondly, improve the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention in order to enhance compliance. We do not have a binding verification protocol. This Conference then, is a vital opportunity to bring together governments, international organizations, the global scientific community, industry representatives, academics and NGOs. I urge all States Parties to play their part in shaping the future of the BTWC and taking specific, effective steps to reduce the risks posed to international security by biological weapons.
9. Thirdly, universality of the BTWC. We need to aim at the universal adherence to the Convention. This involves reaching out to those States that are not yet a party to the Convention. We need to coordinate and improve our efforts to call on those states to legally commit themselves to the non-proliferation and disarmament of biological and toxin

weapons. With 165 treaty parties, we are still lagging behind most other multilateral disarmament treaties.

10. Let us ensure that advances in biological science and technology are used exclusively in support of peace, security and development.

Thank you, Mr President.