

**Biological Weapons Convention
Seventh Review Conference
NGO Statements
5-22 December 2011**



Mr President, distinguished delegates:

The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) greatly appreciates the opportunity once again to address the States Parties to the Convention. We see this Review Conference as the moment to move ahead to the next stage in steering the Convention along a pathway of constructive evolution. It offers the chance to organise for closer cooperation, on a systematic basis: to operate an increasingly robust treaty regime of biological disarmament.

In this statement we have chosen five areas in which to encourage you to reach agreement.

1. Implementation Support Unit

The ISU has proved itself a successful innovation. Its members have been rightly praised. But States Parties need to be realistic about the tasks you allocate and the resources required for the effective fulfilment of those tasks.

Being realistic about the tasks allocated means recognising that the ISU can support existing States Parties in implementing the Convention more fully, as well as advising non-parties on what they will need to do when they join. Support for national implementation in all its aspects needs to be fully integrated into the mandate. So too does the provision of a clearing-house for relevant assistance and cooperation under Article X. And the ISU should also be tasked to play its part on behalf of the Convention in strengthening the interagency capacity of the UN system to manage biological threats and challenges.

Being realistic about the resources required means recognising that merely to meet the volume of requests arising from the original mandate of 2006 would necessitate more staff in any case; and that this must be further augmented if the ISU is to do justice to a wider range of tasks. We are confident that your evaluation will lead to an emphatic vote of confidence and renewal of the ISU's existence. But that renewal should be coupled with resolve to make fuller use of the ISU and to fund it accordingly. So we recommend a considerably larger ISU, one whose resources will match the expanded role of implementation support which we hope this Conference will approve.

2. Intersessional work programme: reshaping the intersessional process

We share the widespread view that the interval between review conferences should be filled more productively and that the Conference should seize this opportunity to reshape the intersessional process.

We hope the Conference will decide on an annual Meeting of States Parties supported by meetings of working groups or standing expert groups, to push ahead work on several topics in parallel. Some groups may need more time than others. Allocation of time among groups is one of the types of decision that the Conference should specifically authorise the Meeting of States Parties to take by consensus, each year, in the interests of flexibility.

What is most important for the next five years is to strengthen this treaty regime through a balanced programme which intensifies work on the Convention in all its aspects, through national and international action. We hope you will commit yourselves, the States Parties, to more continuous and purposeful work together. But to achieve this will require a reshaped intersessional process.

3. Confidence-building measures

Revisiting the content of the information exchanged through CBMs is a key task for this Conference. We hope you will take full advantage of the extensive work that has gone into recommending detailed revisions.

The primary aim of the CBMs is to enhance transparency about national activities. Transparency, however, is about more than just the availability of relevant information. It is also about usefulness.

How useful are the CBMs in building confidence? To develop a clearer, collective vision of their purpose and longer-term evolution, a CBM working group should be established by this Conference. It should enquire whether the existing CBMs provide the transparency needed for reassurance, or whether additional categories of information or different questions would be more useful. The working group could also review the implementation of CBMs, contribute to raising awareness and stimulating greater involvement, and sustain attention in governments focussed on the CBM process and how to make best use of it.

4. Science and technology

We share the view that scientific and technological developments of relevance to the Convention need ongoing collective assessment, and new structures designed to provide this. We hope the Conference will ensure that such assessment takes place in a working group or other forum comprising scientific advisers from academia, industry and government, with input from a wide range of sources including national academies of science and NGOs. We recommend that you also task and resource the ISU to follow developments in science and technology, in support of the Convention.

What you as States Parties should expect from the new arrangements you put in place is an annual report on general trends, supplemented by in-depth reports on specific topics, such as synthetic biology. This will be a vital strand in the intersessional process, as ongoing work in support of the Convention intensifies.

5. Compliance and the future

We encourage you to raise your sights, in the spirit of ambitious realism: look ahead to the Eighth Review Conference and identify the steps that will need to be taken before 2016 if the Convention is to emerge strengthened in operation and recognised as the cornerstone of biological disarmament. These steps will include States Parties demonstrating their compliance to one another, as treaty partners should, in an acceptable framework of accountability, and using agreed procedures to clarify and resolve any compliance concerns that may arise.

This is not too much to hope for. But it will not happen of its own accord. It needs to be properly conceptualised and planned; and we see this conceptualisation and planning as a major function of a working group on compliance, reporting annually to the Meeting of States Parties and finally to the Eighth Review Conference.

Mr President, distinguished delegates: We wish you a productive Conference and thank you for your attention.

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