

DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA TO THE
SEVENTH REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES
TO THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION ON
Geneve, 5 - 22 December 2011

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STATEMENT

by
Ambassador Branka Latinovic - MFA

Thank you, Mr. President.

Serbia has aligned itself with the Statement made by Poland on behalf of the European Union. In my national capacity, I would like to use this opportunity to inform the Conference briefly about some of the national activities regarding the fulfillment of the commitments under BWC.

As I am taking the floor for the first time during this Conference, allow me to congratulate you on behalf of the delegation of Serbia on your election as the President of this Conference as well as to express our gratitude to you for the job you have done in the preparatory phase.

I would also like to extend special thanks to you, Mr President, for taking part, in spite of your numerous obligations, at the First Regional Workshop for South-East Europe on the Seventh Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention, held in Belgrade on 1st and 2nd November 2011.

With your permission I would now like to say a few words about this regional Workshop, which as I have mentioned was held in Belgrade. The convening of this Workshop resulted from the initiative of the European Union Joint Action in Support of the BWC, based in Geneve and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia. We are using this opportunity to thank all those who put a lot of personal effort and energy into making this event possible.

The representatives from the following states took part at the Workshop: Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Montenegro, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Slovenia, and Serbia. Participants also included a number of prominent experts from international organisations, institutes and universities from the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States. The Workshop was an important event which contributed to the exchange of information and experience among the States Parties from the region as well as to discussing themes and possible outcomes for the VII Review Conference. The work was organized in seventh sessions. During the discussions particular attention was given to the issues on the strengthening of national implementation activities of the Convention, future enhancing of CBMs, strengthening of national capacities for elaboration of laws and regulations to implement BWC, supporting the BWC through UN Security Council Resolution 1540, role and assistance of Implementation Support Unit/ISU. We are gratified to note that a number of important initiatives, proposals and suggestions have been made. Common approach is that the continued co-operation through the holding of future Regional Workshops is welcome.

Mr. President,

The BTWC is one of the cornerstones of multilateral efforts to fight proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Serbia gave its full support to the BTWC process of its full and effective implementation on the national and regional level as well as for its universality as one of the important pillars of global security premises. Also, we are dedicated to implement our commitments regarding

other relevant international documents like UNSC Resolution 1540 as a comprehensive international instrument on non-proliferation as well as other treaties and arrangements in this field.

Since the last BTWC Review Conference, Serbia has demonstrated its readiness for further improvement of its capacities concerning the various aspects of the BWC implementation at the national level through the adoption of laws and regulations in this regard. The new dimension presents an improvement of the regional cooperation.

With regard to the national obligations in accordance with the relevant decisions and recommendations of the previous Review Conference, the Parliament of Serbia adopted on 29 May 2009 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – International Treaties No. 42/09 of 2 June 2009) the Law on the withdrawal of the reservation to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, i.e. the Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare.

With the aim to improve the national legislation in this regard, the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia adopted on 17 November 2011 the Law on the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of bacteriological (biological) and toxin weapons and on their destruction (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No 87/11 of 21 November 2011). This Law belongs to framework laws in which we reiterate again our commitments for full implementation of the obligations under the BTWC. Also, this Law obliged the relevant ministries to restart the preparations for the adoption of a new Law, in line with the fulfillment of new international standards for the adoption of new instruments and means for the implementation of BTWC.

Namely, as I informed during the last Annual Meeting of the Parties on BWC, the draft Law for the implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, at the beginning of 2009, was submitted to the VERTIC for expertise and verification. We appreciated very much VERTIC engagement in this matter. During the national procedure for the adoption of this Law we concluded that in the new situation, as a result of the financial constraints, the relevant ministries did not have enough administrative capacities and financial resources for the implementation of the proposed Law. In accordance with the new Law, just adopted, we are planning to restart our work on the new law, based on the Draft Law submitted to VERTIC. It will be planned according to the existing possibilities.

Serbia continues to submit regularly the annual Declaration on CBM. We are aware that we should improve our system and instruments on CBM Declaration.

Also, we have improved our scope of activities in the other areas of non-proliferation. We prepared an Updated information to the national report of the Republic of Serbia (2008) on the national activities regarding the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004), which is in the process of being sent. In the area of national legislation, the Draft Law on international restrictive measures is being prepared and the process of updating the national Criminal Code is under way.

An adequate attention is being given to raising the awareness of the BWC, particularly to the issue of the threat of bio-terrorism.

Namely, the lectures on this issue are part of the educational program at the Military Academy. The intention is to include this issue in the educational programs of other academic institutions on different levels.

Serbia is also ready to give its contribution to the promotion of universal adherence of all States to the BTWC.

The delegation of Serbia stands ready to work constructively with you and other State Parties in meeting our common goal.

Thank you, Mr. President.