



UK Mission  
Geneva

**UK Statement for Seventh Biological and Toxin Weapons  
Convention Review Conference**

**5 December 2011**

Mr. President,

I am delighted to be here to address the Conference – one of the most important Review Conferences in the history of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

At the outset, the United Kingdom wishes to align itself with the statement to be made by the European Union and its three over-arching priorities for reviewing the BTWC.

I would like to thank Ambassador Paul van den Ijssel for taking on the Presidency of the Conference. We are grateful for the hard work by you, your Indonesian and Hungarian Co-Chairs and of course the UN. And it would be remiss of me not to mention the huge contribution made by the Implementation Support Unit, whose mandate we hope will be extended by this Conference.

Mr. President,

The UK has a keen sense of responsibility for this Convention as the original proposal for a separate ban on biological weapons was made by the United Kingdom back in 1968. We have always sought to make the Convention as effective as possible and have been consistent supporters of the efforts to that end ever since the First Review Conference in 1980.

As States Parties, we have much to be proud of since we last came together in 2006. The agreed intersessional work programme has served several purposes including promoting oversight, education, and awareness-raising among our national experts, including scientists.

At a political level, we have increased our common investment in a disarmament Convention which only nine years ago looked to be in serious trouble. In an age of uncertainty and change, this common resolve is precious.

But now is a moment to move beyond what we have achieved already and see how we can do even better. We are at a critical juncture in the Convention's history; it has – for almost forty years - been a cornerstone of the international approach to combating the threat to international peace and security posed by biological weapons.

We must act now to ensure that the Convention remains up to the task, not only to confront effectively the threats but also to multiply the opportunities. We must, for example, ensure we can all reap the benefits of the peaceful uses of micro-organisms, and ensure advances in the life sciences are used but not abused.

Mr. President,

The Convention is often seen as focusing purely on preventing the production or acquisition of biological weapons. It is also important to remind ourselves of its relevance in the field of peaceful bacteriological activities and co-operation.

In this context, we should recognise the work undertaken under other initiatives which reinforce the BTWC. For example, under the G8 Global Partnership, several States Parties have carried out projects contributing to cooperation for peaceful purposes and disease prevention. The UK, for example, has funded research on brucellosis and malaria and, through the World Health Organisation supported training on Bio-risk Management to build capacity at national and regional levels. At the 2011 G8 Summit, Leaders agreed to renew the G8 Global Partnership, with biological security as a priority area for programming. This will directly benefit the Convention. In addition, activity, in support of UNSCR1540 assists States with their national implementation.

Steps taken to promote and build capacities to combat infectious diseases of humans, animals and plants, also provide a stronger national, regional and international ability to provide support and assistance to any State exposed to danger as a result of a violation of this Convention. It is therefore important we examine how best to engage with organisations such as the World Health Organisation, World Organisation for Animal Health and United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation to enhance such capabilities and achieve the optimum practical response.

Mr. President,

As the representative of one of the Convention's three depositaries I warmly welcome Burundi and Mozambique, the most recent States Parties to join the Convention. Only when the Convention is universal will all States parties reap its full benefits. I call on all States that have not already done so, to accede to or ratify the Convention without further delay. And to existing States Parties - let us work together to reach out to those who need our support to enable them to join.

I particularly urge Non-States Parties from the Middle East, Egypt, Israel and Syria to accede to or ratify the Convention, or take significant steps in that direction which could help build confidence in the region and support the concept of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone.

In May 2010, the UK, US and Russia were tasked by the NPT Review Conference to take forward, in conjunction with the UN Secretary-General, a Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone Conference in 2012. I am delighted the UN Secretary-General announced on all our behalves a few weeks ago that Finland will be the host government of this event. This morning I hosted a fascinating outreach event to enable the facilitator, Under-Secretary of State Jaakko Laajava to discuss with many of you here today, how the BTWC can contribute to that Conference and the Conference to the BTWC.

Mr. President,

During this Review Conference, the UK sees several opportunities to set the Convention on a much stronger footing. Our three key aims are:

- First, a new substantive programme of annual intersessional meetings;
- Second, an appropriate level of intersessional decision-making;
- Third, a regular review process for scientific and technological developments .

**Intersessional meetings.** As we plan the next five years, we need to build on our achievements. We should now introduce an even more carefully structured approach to the intersessional meetings, and incorporate a continuous review of issues relevant to the Convention. The UK has proposed a new intersessional process focussed on three themes: National Implementation; Cooperation and Assistance; and Developments in Science and Technology. The details are set out in our Working Paper. These are intended as food for thought. Other States Parties will have their own ideas and we look forward to a rich debate over the coming weeks as we focus on the areas of common ground.

**Decision-making.** We want a Convention capable of both prompt and effective action and of enhancing international security. We believe States Parties should be able to take certain decisions during the intersessional period. Future Expert and State Party meetings could be mandated to take such decisions where there is consensus that this is a proper course to take. If there is consensus, why wait for the next Review Conference?

**Science and Technology.** The Convention needs to keep pace with the rapid advances in science and technology. Our background paper prepared for this Conference, highlights key themes and how they might

be addressed. One key issue is the need to further promote BTWC awareness raising and education in the scientific community.

Mr. President,

A word about verification. The UK was a leading player during the Protocol negotiations that took place in this building and worked hard with other States Parties to secure a successful outcome. As we all know, that was not to be. We should of course discuss issues which many States Parties care about. But let us keep this in proportion and focus on the achievable.

We have the chance to agree on a substantive new work programme that goes beyond what has gone before. And with this, we have the opportunity to improve the Confidence Building Measures, an important tool in building confidence in compliance.

The issues for consideration and action reflect our common interests. We should not view these as representing single regional constituencies only, but as substantive cross-cutting topics in their own right where advances will be in all our interests and where consensus is possible.

We would therefore urge all delegations to focus on the pragmatic and achievable and avoid fighting old battles. We believe firmly there is much common ground amongst the delegations from all regions – the opportunity is there for an outcome that goes beyond what we achieved in 2002 and 2006. Let us be bold and seize that opportunity.

Thank you.