

Unofficial translation from Russian

**Statement by the Russian delegation
at the meeting of experts of
the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention**

Geneva, 4 August 2014

Mr Chairman,

We welcome you on your assumption of the chairmanship of this year's intersessional meetings and express confidence that they will be successful under your experienced leadership. You may count on co-operation of the Russian delegation in addressing the tasks that we have in front of us.

The Russian delegation intends to participate meaningfully in the work of the meeting contributing to all thematic discussions. We have also prepared a side event named "International co-operation in ensuring biosecurity: utilising specialised mobile units" that will take place on Tuesday, 5 August, in room XXII – to which everyone is invited.

Mr Chairman,

Now we would like to address the underlying issues relating to the BWC.

The Convention opened for signature in 1972, has made then a contribution to strengthening international law pertaining to the prohibition of biological and toxin weapons. That being so, the Convention also remains a product of its time. In particular, this manifests itself in the absence in its provisions of the prohibition on the use of biological and toxin weapons and the absence of compliance control mechanism.

The need to strengthen the Convention due to its obvious weaknesses was realised a long time ago. As early as at the Second Review Conference in 1986 the Soviet Union proposed to elaborate a legally binding Protocol to the Convention to include a compliance control mechanism and for that purpose to convene a special conference of States Parties. Such interest was shared by many other States Parties. However, such Special Conference became possible only in 1994. It was preceded by an important and substantive work of the Group of Governmental Experts (VEREX) established by the Third Review Conference. The VEREX by consensus arrived at a finding that the application of verification measures could reinforce the Convention and contribute to improving its implementation.

Based on such a finding, States Parties having set up an Ad Hoc Group began elaborating a legally binding instrument which became known as the Protocol. Not only compliance promotion measures were envisaged in the Protocol, but also important measures to foster implementation of Article X (international co-operation) and Article VII (assistance and protection from biological and toxin weapons). Since 2001, due to the known circumstances the development of the Protocol has been suspended. Nonetheless, the 1994 negotiating mandate remains in force, and the fruits of all substantive work on the Protocol for the period 1995-2001 remain with us.

Mr Chairman,

In the year 2015 this Convention will mark its 40th anniversary. What has been done over that time to strengthen it? Little can be said to our credit, apart from the introduction of the confidence-building measures in 1987 (expanded in 1991 and revised in 2011) whose limited effectiveness and utility are obvious. Productive and creative work undertaken in the framework of the Convention in 1991-2001 has remained on hold for 13 years.

The Russian delegation believes that a sorry future may await the Convention and its regime unless States Parties come to an agreement regarding effective ways of strengthening the BWC. Such a sorry future may have direct and tragic consequences because the Convention in its current shape is not capable of effectively serving its main purpose – to sustain a reliable prohibition on the development, production and use of biological and toxin weapons. A weak disarmament regime creates only an illusion of security where it may be absent. This perception regarding the BWC only grows against the backdrop of the rapid advances in science and technology especially since many of them have a clear dual-use capability.

Mr Chairman,

This May, in the context of preparations for the Eighth Review Conference in 2016, Russia launched an initiative on seeking views of States Parties on the prospects of resuming multilateral negotiations to develop a legally binding

instrument to strengthen the Convention pursuant to the 1994 mandate. To that end, we have circulated among all States Parties a note verbale with a questionnaire asking them to send in replies by 13 July. Bearing in mind that States Parties required additional time to consider their replies, we will continue receiving them until the end of November so that a final review can be presented at the meeting of States Parties this December.

As of late July, we have received replies – written and verbal – from 28 States Parties: Belarus, India, United States, Brazil, Iraq, Cuba, Pakistan, China, New Zealand, Algeria, Cyprus, Rwanda, Switzerland, Saint Lucia, Australia, Latvia, South Africa, Peru, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Lebanon, Mexico, Cambodia, Estonia, Colombia, Sweden, United Kingdom, and Lithuania. Of them only three replies contain a negative answer. Other States Parties have not sent in negative answers while many have clearly spoken in favour of resuming negotiations.

Mr Chairman,

The Russian initiative is aimed at a collegial examination of opportunities that we can utilise to strengthen the Convention through a legally binding instrument. The 1994 mandate agreed by all of us is formulated in such a way that it does not presuppose how the legally binding instrument may look like at the end. We emphasise that the Russian initiative pursues ways of strengthening the BWC based on the 1994 negotiating mandate and it is not intended to bring us back to the situation of 2001.

We are of the view that the time remaining before the Eighth Review Conference in 2016 should be utilised by us to collectively reflect on how the Conference may contribute to creating appropriate conditions for resuming negotiations and on their conclusion for the adoption of the legally binding instrument to strengthen the Convention.

To exchange views in that regard we invite all who are interested to an informal meeting on Tuesday, 5 August at 1800, in room XXII.

Thank you.