

Statement of the G8 Foreign Ministers on the 7th Review Conference for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

March 15, 2011, Paris

1. We, the G8 Foreign Ministers, affirm our unconditional support to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), which is both the first multilateral instrument banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction and the cornerstone of international efforts to prohibit biological and toxin weapons. We value the work undertaken by States Parties in recent years.
2. The possible misapplication of technological developments in the area of life sciences and the risk posed by development or use of a biological or toxin weapon by States or non-state-actors are major issues for the international community. In this regard, we emphasize that strengthening of the BTWC regime plays a principal role in diminishing the threat of proliferation and acquisition of dangerous biological agents, deliberate misuse of life sciences and biotechnologies for development of biological and toxin weapons. The 7th BTWC Review Conference to be held in December 2011 in Geneva provides an opportunity to reaffirm the authority and increased relevance of this vital instrument for our collective security in an ever changing context. Tangible progress with respect to increasing mutual confidence in compliance is very much needed for the BTWC as one of the most important global arms control treaties.
3. We intend to pursue our consultations with all BTWC States Parties to establish a consensus on the major issues of the Review Conference and on the necessary actions to address these issues. We will support the efforts of the appointed President of this Review Conference, Ambassador van den IJssel, to succeed in adopting a balanced and substantive final declaration, which will pave the way for tangible progress with respect to implementation of and compliance with the provisions of the Convention. We, the G8 Foreign Ministers, invite all States Parties to take an active part in the Review Conference and welcome their substantive contribution.
4. Guided by the objective of a more secure and safer world, and convinced that the use of such weapons is unacceptable to the conscience of humanity and would pose a grave threat to international security, we reaffirm our commitment to fully respect all obligations under the BTWC and in particular to never, under any circumstances, develop, produce, stockpile or otherwise acquire, retain or use this type of weapon. We call upon all States Parties to the Convention to join us in the effort to effectively preclude the acquisition and use of biological weapons by both State and non-state actors and we will continue assistance and cooperation actions through all appropriate channels.
5. Full and effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention by all States Parties is required to achieve its objectives. Aware of the importance of the intersessional work of the Convention to achieve this objective, we are determined to engage in discussions with all States Parties on a new and substantive work programme addressing the central issues of the Convention, including looking at more effective ways to enhance assurance of compliance with the BTWC as well as the implications of relevant scientific and technological developments for all appropriate articles of the Convention.
6. We are likewise determined to work with States Parties and others to devise ways to strengthen the Convention and its regime, with a view to considering and taking relevant decisions at the 7th Review Conference. We will also support the strengthening of the current UNSG mechanism for investigating cases of alleged use of chemical and biological weapons in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 42/37.
7. We commend the quality of the work conducted by the Implementation Support Unit over the past five years. We pledge our full support to renewing the ISU's mandate and, if necessary, to consolidating it, following an assessment of its tasks and resources by the Review conference.

8. Transparency among States Parties is an essential condition for confidence. With this in mind, it is necessary to ensure confidence building measures of the Convention remain relevant and useful in order to reflect recent scientific and technical developments. We are determined to pursue with all States Parties work to improve transparency and to step up efforts to increase participation in the confidence building measures. We call upon States that have not yet submitted their confidence-building measures to do so on a regular basis so that their initial objective can be met. Like the European Union, whose efforts we commend, we will continue to assist States that wish to benefit from technical assistance in submitting their confidence-building measures.

9. The involvement of civil society, particularly the academic and industrial sectors, is essential to the effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention. We will therefore step up such engagement to fully take account of scientific and technical developments in the biological area. We will likewise work on better awareness raising among those involved in the development of life sciences in order to limit the possibilities of misuse of technical developments, including supporting dual-use education programs on bioethics.

10. The universality of the Convention is indispensable. We will make every effort to achieve this objective and urge all States that have not already done so, to accede to the Convention.

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