



**PERMANENT MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA TO
THE UNITED NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICA TO THE MEETING OF STATES PARTIES
TO THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION
GENEVA: 10 TO 14 DECEMBER 2007**

Mr President,

Allow me to congratulate you on chairing this meeting and to assure you of my delegation's continued support for your efforts to direct our deliberations. My delegation can categorically state that for South Africa, the threat of disease being used as a weapon, remains an issue of serious concern. South Africa therefore remains committed to the strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) to ensure that our common goal of preventing the threat posed by biological weapons is achieved.

Mr President,

In the above regard, my delegation continues to believe that this is not a commitment or a goal that can only be undertaken by individual States or groups of States acting on their own. If our opposition to biological weapons is to be sustained in the long term, it is necessary that the members of the international community -- as a whole -- take action and commit themselves to strengthening the norm against the development, production, stockpiling and use of these reprehensible weapons. South Africa continues to see the strengthening of the implementation of the BWC as a core element of international security.

In this context we believe that continued universalisation of the BWC is essential. We welcome Gabon as the 159th State Party to the Convention and congratulate Kazakhstan, Trinidad and Tobago and Montenegro on their accession since the Sixth Review Conference. We are encouraged by the success of the "Promotion of Universalisation" of the BWC as decided upon by the Sixth Review Conference and support the continued efforts of the BWC in this regard.

Mr. President,

An important part of our work here in the coming week will be to look at ways in which national implementation of the Convention can be enhanced and what role regional and sub-regional cooperation can play in the implementation of the Convention. We have the benefit of drawing on presentations and deliberations of the meeting of Governmental Experts (GGE) in Geneva in August this year. We congratulate the Governmental Experts on the work they have done and look forward to further debating these matters in the coming week. We likewise thank you for the "Synthesis Paper" that you produced following the Meeting of Experts and which encapsulates the various proposals and ideas that emerged during that meeting.

South Africa is committed to close collaboration with countries in the region and within the Continent on the implementation of the Convention and in the advancement of the goals of the BWC. The importance of sharing experiences and learning from best practices in the implementation of the Convention and in regional cooperation was highlighted at the GGE. We view this as fundamental to the successful implementation of the BWC and to the forging of a community of nations, which will be our best defence against the threat posed by biological weapons. It is through this type of collaboration that countries would also be able to identify the best solutions for the challenges they are facing in aligning their national processes with the BWC.

Mr President,

The threat that biological weapons hold for the international community has been more than amply demonstrated in the past. The necessity at this Meeting of States Parties is for all States Parties to approach our work in a constructive way and to co-operate so as to accomplish our common goal, and to satisfy the aspiration of the international community as a whole. South Africa therefore calls on all States Parties to the BWC to do all in their power to prevent the use of disease as weapons of war and terror.

In closing, Mr President, please allow me to express my delegation's appreciation for the efforts of the Implementation Support Unit and to encourage the ISU to keep up the good work. We would likewise also thank you for your initiative in arranging special informal sessions during the course of this Meeting of States Parties and look forward to the opportunity to hear the views of NGOs and Industry representatives at these sessions.

Mr President, I thank you.