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GENEVE

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**6^e Conférence d'examen de la Convention sur
l'interdiction de la mise au point, de la fabrication et
du stockage des armes bactériologiques
(biologiques) ou à toxines et sur leur destruction**

DECLARATION

prononcée par l'Ambassadeur Jürg Streuli

Débat général

Genève, le 20 novembre 2006

Mr President,

I would like to begin by saying on behalf of my delegation how pleased we are about your presidency. The quality of your management of the Preparatory Committee in April is the best of guarantees for the success of the 6th Review Conference on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction (BTWC). We are counting on your considerable experience to enable us to successfully complete our work. More particularly I welcome the presence of the Secretary General of the United Nations. By attending our debates, you are both helping to enhance the impact and giving a strong impetus to this review conference.

Mr President,

Above all I would like to stress that the Convention on Biological Weapons, together with the 1925 Geneva Protocol, remains the main pillar of the international regime for the prohibition of biological weapons. This convention is by far the best framework in which to co-ordinate our efforts to confront the deliberate biological threat, whether this threat originates from a State or not. My country calls on all the States that have not yet signed or ratified the BTWC and the 1925 Geneva Protocol to do so as soon as possible.

The use of biological weapons, which is formally prohibited by the 1925 Geneva Protocol and implicitly prohibited by the BTWC, would not only be contrary to the provisions of these instruments but would also represent a serious violation of humanitarian principles that are established by custom and prohibit notably the use of weapons causing superfluous harm and which by their nature strike indiscriminately. Switzerland believes that the final report of this review conference should clearly and firmly state this. Moreover it is necessary that the final document reflects the substance of the conference and should be a starting point for increased activity by States in the process of strengthening the Convention.

After ten years without a final declaration, it is essential that the Convention should not only re-affirm the norm relating to the prohibition of biological weapons and the strengthening of this norm but that it should be adapted to take account of present and future biological threats, notably by ensuring implementation at the national level.

Mr President,

The last review conference started a process designed to strengthen the implementation of the Convention. In the view of my delegation, the three years of the follow-up programme of the 5th Review Conference have produced satisfactory results, thanks in particular to the quality of the presentations by experts and the range of useful information that was exchanged. This fruitful programme was the best proof of the importance of establishing a new intersessional programme leading up to the 7th Review Conference. This follow-up process should take account of the present and future challenges facing the Convention. To this end we consider it important that we should be able to cover thematic areas that are broad enough in order to produce specific results that could then be evaluated at the 7th Review Conference in 2011.

Mr President,

My country remains convinced that the drafting of an additional, legally binding protocol for the verification of the provisions of the Convention must remain our goal. We are equally convinced that at the moment the basic conditions for the relaunch of negotiations on this subject have not been fulfilled. In this context, Switzerland will not fail to make an active and constructive contribution to the success of this review conference and, in a spirit of pragmatism and of efficiency, it will concentrate its efforts on areas where common ground can be found. This is why we call on all delegations to formulate objectives that are both ambitious but realistic.

It is in this spirit that Switzerland has drafted a working document designed to improve and to strengthen confidence-building measures. My country remains convinced that, in the absence of other verification mechanisms, a priority should be given to these measures both in the present review conference and in the framework of the follow-up and the process between 2007 and 2011. To facilitate the work of the conference and to avoid possible duplications, we previously consulted the content of our text within the informal group of countries (the JACKSNZZ Group) to which Canada has just referred.

Finally, Switzerland hopes that this review conference will be held in a constructive spirit and with the firm determination to achieve concrete results. We are at the disposal of the presidency and of the other delegations for any discussions which could enable us to make progress in this debate.

Thank you for your attention.