



Statement by the  
**BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP)**  
to the 6th Review Conference of the BTWC

*21 November 2006*

**BioWeapons Prevention Project**

Avenue de Sécheron 12  
CH-1202 Geneva  
Switzerland

Tel.: 41-22-908 5836  
Fax.: 41-22-738 3582  
e-mail: [bwpp@bwpp.org](mailto:bwpp@bwpp.org)  
Internet: <http://www.bwpp.org>

1. Mr President, Distinguished Representatives, it is a great honour to be invited to make a statement to this Review Conference of the States Parties to the BTWC in my role as Director of the international NGO, the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP). The BWPP monitors political, societal, scientific and technological developments with possible implications for the use of disease as a weapon, and the implementation of the legal and political obligations of states under the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), the final declarations of the BTWC Review Conferences, and other relevant international treaties and agreements. The BWPP also tracks other efforts to strengthen the norms against the weaponization of disease and the misuse of biology and biotechnology for hostile purposes. The BWPP global network represents 54 civil society organizations on four continents.
2. In the light of the failure to formally conclude a full review of the articles of the BTWC and assessment of the scientific and technological challenges to the objectives and purpose of the convention in 2001–02, it is of utmost importance that the 6th Review Conference achieves these basic objectives. A full review has not taken place since the 4th Review Conference in 1996. Given the many new commitments and obligations under international law since 1996; given the changes in the international security environment; and given the importance of biology and biotechnology in the societal, economic and technological development of societies, it will be important for the states parties to determine their expectations from the BTWC—not just for today, but also for many years to come. This will enable them to identify core and peripheral matters of concern and clarify the relationship between the BTWC and other instruments to counter the BW threat (e.g., WHO, United Nations, including the responsibilities of the UN Secretary-General to investigate allegations of deliberate use of biological agents and the inspection capacity and expertise of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, UNMOVIC). The 2003-05 intersessional process emphasised the relevance of national implementation of the convention in order to address new security challenges and offered useful platforms for exchanges of information on a number of topics. The 6th Review Conference will be the first opportunity to draw conclusions—and possibly define commitments—from these intersessional meetings.
3. The BTWC appears to be a strange creature. On occasion people seem to be rolling over each other in proclaiming how weak the convention is. However, at the heart of the BTWC is a very strong norm against the weaponisation and use for hostile purposes of

disease. It is a norm so strong that today no state can publicly admit to having stockpiled BW. It is a norm so strong that for shame or fear of loss of face it even prevents several Parties to the BTWC from coming clean about past warfare programmes or more limited projects involving the development and use of pathogens and toxins for assassination and covert warfare.

4. States Parties attach great importance to the BTWC and the norm it embraces. Otherwise they would not have engaged in almost uninterrupted diplomatic activity searching for ways to strengthen the convention. Indeed, despite the statement of the formal goal in Article XII of the BTWC, the review conference process represents much more than a periodical check on the health of the convention or an assessment of scientific and technological challenges to the norm against the weaponisation of disease. Taken together, the review conferences have been a laboratory for experimentation in methods to build trust, generate transparency, and, ultimately, offer security to states parties.
5. While these activities demonstrate that the BTWC is an active treaty and the central norm retains its validity, the limited progress on strengthening the convention over more than three decades also allowed a lot of frustration and animosity to build up. The long gap between review conferences means that there will always be significant time lapses between the emergence of new ideas and the time by which the states parties can take them up. The diplomatic process is invariably slower than the issues they need to address. Even if there is quasi-permanent diplomatic activity, the meetings can only deal with limited, pre-agreed topics. In support of a more timely consideration of developments, the BWPP welcomes the willingness of the States Parties to consider a next cycle of annual meetings involving experts and government representatives.
6. Mr President, Distinguished Representatives, by way of conclusion I wish to draw your attention to the pages on the BWPP website dedicated to the 6th Review Conference.<sup>1</sup> One of its main goals is to nurture broader public interest in your activities. In addition, the BWPP will issue almost daily progress reports on the diplomatic activities. These progress reports you will find in this room before the meetings starts. In addition, they are available from the BWPP Review Conference webpages, or you may wish to

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bwpp.org/6RevCon/6thRevConResources.html>

subscribe to them electronically.<sup>2</sup> The details on how to obtain the documents are in the printed version of my presentation. We hope that you will find the effort useful.

7. Meanwhile, we are looking forward to a successful outcome of the meetings. Thank you very much.

---

<sup>2</sup> People who wish to receive the Review Conference report by e-mail should send a blank e-mail to <<bwpp-revcon-report-subscribe@yahoogroups.com>> which will trigger the system to send them an message in return which includes a request to confirm the intention to subscribe.