

PREFACE

In preparing for the Third Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, much has been said about the need to strengthen the Convention. Part of this discussion involves proposals to amend the Convention to include verification provisions, quite apart from other efforts, past and future, to consider the addition of voluntary confidence-building measures.

Before one can talk about verification or confidence-building in a substantive way, it is important to have a clear understanding of the range of materials and activities that might need to be addressed by such schemes. In the case of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, there have been significant improvements in the nature and number of technologies and facilities used in the production of materials relevant to the Convention. These advances, then, are also relevant to the nature and scope of any potential verification regime or confidence-building measures. This paper focuses on these technological changes, suggesting some of the considerations that will need to be taken into account should it be decided to attempt to improve upon the existing Convention.

In attempting to provide some historical background on the way toxins were regarded in the past, many different viewpoints had to be compressed into a few paragraphs. The compromises may not find universal acceptance but, since such material is not the focus of this document, these historical references should be regarded only as illustrative of the discussion that has taken place in the open literature.

The Canadian Government wishes to acknowledge the work performed under contract by Brac Scientific Consulting, in collaboration with the Verification Research Unit of External Affairs and International Trade Canada. All of the material discussed in this publication is derived from readily available open sources.

Apart from the preceding Foreword, the views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Canadian Government as they exist today or as they will eventually materialize from the international consultative process. However, it was considered that this document would be of interest to other States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, and so it was agreed to give it wider distribution in order to promote discussion.