

## Canada Calls for BTWC Compliance Regime

As this Bulletin went to press, States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) were gathered in Geneva to review the Convention's operation with a view to assuring its purposes and provisions are being realized. The BTWC, which prohibits the development, production, acquisition and stockpiling of biological and toxin weapons, was negotiated in the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (the forerunner of today's Conference on Disarmament) and was opened for signature in April 1972. Canada deposited its instrument of ratification in September 1972. The BTWC entered into force in March 1975. More than 115 states now adhere to the Convention, including all permanent members of the UN Security Council. Previous review conferences were held in 1980 and 1986.

Below are excerpts from the opening statement by the head of the Canadian delegation to the Third Review Conference, Ambassador for Disarmament Peggy Mason. The Conference was held from September 9 to 27.

If ever there was any doubt as to the horror associated by our publics with the prospect of the use of biological weapons, the recent Gulf War has erased that doubt and indeed has underscored through press reports the full extent of that public horror. There can be no justification whatsoever for the use, or threat of use, of such terrible instruments of terrorism, capable of causing casualties and death on a massive scale. Outright condemnation of such weapons is the very foundation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention which seeks to ensure — by banning their development, production and stockpiling — that these weapons will never be available for use.

The Gulf War and its aftermath, particularly the work of the United Nations Special Commission, have highlighted not only the timeliness of this Review Conference but also the urgent need for States Parties to consider all appropriate measures to strengthen the legal and moral ban enshrined in the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

The general purpose of this Review Conference is already established by the Convention itself: it is to review the operation of the Convention with a view to assuring that its purposes and provisions are being realized. It has also been established that the review will take into account any new scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention.

My delegation is pleased to join with others who have distributed material on the subject of scientific and technological developments — developments both dramatic in nature and swift in their impact. In this regard, I am referring to the document entitled "Novel Toxins and Bioregulators: The Emerging Scientific and Technological Issues Relating to Verification and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention" which Canada has distributed to delegations through the Secretariat. This document describes some of the exciting work that has taken place relatively recently in the field of biotechnology, and it expresses some concern about the potential for diversion of such materials and technologies to hostile purposes.

This brings me to another important element on the agenda of the Third Review Conference. The Final Declaration in 1986 specified that we would consider not only whether further cooperative (or politically-binding) measures might be warranted, but also that we would consider whether legally-binding improvements to the Convention, or a combination of both, might be

called for. On these matters there will undoubtedly be a variety of views and a need to find suitable compromises. However, let me state clearly at the outset that my delegation is fully prepared to consider the creation of additional legally-binding commitments, whether for the purpose of confidence-building or verification or both.

With respect to verification, we do not believe this will be a simple matter open to simple solutions. In fact, the document that we have circulated adds additional weight to the view that there

are many complex dimensions to the verification issue, particularly as regards the diffuse biotechnology sector. Nevertheless, verification is not just a yes-or-no, all-or-nothing proposition, and Canada is of the view that, despite the difficulties, progress can be made in strengthening this vital aspect of the Convention. We must begin to tackle the questions as to exactly what can be done and how best to go about it, and my delegation very much looks forward to a constructive and imaginative discussion of these questions.

Let me turn to the cooperative measures agreed at the Second Review Conference and the modalities subsequently agreed by an Ad Hoc Meeting of Scientific and Technical Experts. My delegation recognizes that there may have been some confusion in relation to what action was expected on the part of States Parties in order to implement the agreed measures. Surely this Review Conference will ensure that we can lay to rest these misperceptions and emerge with a common understanding on this important matter. The time has come for us to demonstrate solidarity on what has already been agreed, as a necessary step along the road to the effective consideration of further measures. In the meantime, we can derive some satisfac-

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tion from the fact that there has been a noticeable increase in the number of annual reports submitted to the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs.

One thing is clear, however. It is not sufficient simply to argue in favour of, or lend support to, establishing obligations, whether legally- or politically-binding. We must all face up to the fact that such agreed measures entail subsequent national efforts and costs. Much has been said about the "peace dividend" that can arise from spending less money on armaments and diverting