



## **Canada in Full Compliance with Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention**

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention prohibits the development, production and stockpiling of such weapons and provides for their destruction. The Convention was negotiated in the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament and was opened for signature in April 1972. Canada deposited its instrument of ratification in September 1972. It entered into force in March 1975. More than 100 states now adhere to the Convention, including all permanent members of the UN Security Council.

The Convention lacks effective verification provisions. In part, this may reflect the belief, widely held at the time it was concluded, that the development or use of such weapons was not a practicable possibility for the foreseeable future. However, advances in biotechnological research in the intervening years have prompted concerns about what many see as an increased potential for the development of biological or toxin weapons. Several allegations of breaches of the Convention have in fact been made. This has caused the international community to give increased attention to ways of strengthening confidence that all parties are in full compliance with the terms of the Convention.

A small step was taken at the First Review Conference in 1980, where it was agreed that in seeking to resolve any problem relating to the objectives and application of the Convention, any State Party has a right to request an expert-level consultative meeting open to all States Parties.

At the Second Review Conference, held in Geneva September 8-26, not only was this right reaffirmed but important additional progress was made through agreement on a variety of measures to strengthen confidence in the effective application of the Convention. The Conference agreed, *inter alia*, to exchange data and information on certain research centres and laboratories and on outbreaks of infectious diseases,

to encourage the publication of biological research related to the Convention and to promote contacts among scientists engaged in such research. An *ad hoc* meeting of experts is to be held in Geneva in April 1987 to work out modalities for the implementation of these measures.

Canada's main objectives at the Second Review Conference were: to register unambiguously our continuing concerns relating to unresolved uncertainties about compliance; to affirm Canada's full compliance with all the provisions of the Convention; to promote dispassionate discussion of ongoing biotechnological research and its potential implications for the application of the Convention; and to foster consensus on a Conference final document which would incorporate agreed measures to strengthen the effective application of the Convention. Canada considers these objectives to have been met.

*Following is the text of the Canadian statement to the Second Review Conference on Biological and Toxin Weapons, made on September 9 by the Head of the Canadian delegation to the Conference, Mr. Arsène Després, Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Canada in Geneva.*

"The Canadian delegation welcomes the opportunity to participate in this Second Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction. As has frequently been observed, this Convention has a quality of uniqueness in being the first multilateral agreement concluded with the purpose of effectively eliminating permanently from the earth an entire category of weapons. The strict adherence of all parties to all the terms and obligations of the Convention is thus a matter of singular importance. So, too, is the need for universality of adherence to the Convention and the norms which it embodies.

We should also not lose sight of the fact that when the Convention was concluded, as reflected in its preamble and in Article IX, it was seen as an important step towards the effective prohibition of chemical weapons. The negotiations to that end in the recently completed session of the Conference on Disarmament give cause for cautious hope that the prospects for the attainment of this objective have improved. It would be appropriate for the Conference to urge that the serious pursuit of those negotiations be intensified. Just as important, we must take care to conduct ourselves in this Conference in ways which are supportive of and in no way undermine or prejudice that negotiating effort.

As seen by the Canadian delegation, our task here will be twofold: to examine dispassionately the operation of the Convention since its entering into force; and to consider ways in which the effectiveness of its application might be strengthened so as to increase the level of assurance that all parties are adhering rigorously to their obligations. It is a truism that all areas of arms control and disarmament involve a kind of race between the ceaseless advances of science and technology and the ability of policymakers and lawmakers to ensure that such advances are used to strengthen rather than to undermine international peace and security. In the field of biotechnology, this tension between scientific and technical advance — which can be of inestimable value for enhancing the health, comfort and security of peoples everywhere — and the potential for misuse for non-peaceful purposes, is especially acute. Since the time when the Convention entered into force, even since the First Review Conference, there have been major advances in numerous aspects of biotechnology. The material put before us by the Depository governments makes this clear. Much of this technological progress, even when it results from perfectly legitimate, peaceful research programmes could, with distressingly little effort, be redirected towards illegitimate purposes of the kind prohibited by the Convention which we are reviewing. Indeed, such is the state of biotechnology that there is room for legitimate doubt that the Convention to