FIRST COMMITTEE
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Australia’s Priorities for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention Review Conference

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(Check against delivery)

Madam Chair

The forthcoming BWC Review Conference provides a vital opportunity for the international community to strengthen its defences against the proliferation of biological and toxin weapons.

It is an opportunity that we can ill-afford to squander, all the more so while the threat from bio-terrorism persists.

Australia has been a long-standing advocate for the full and effective implementation of the BWC – as we have been for other complimentary measures, including the Proliferation Security Initiative and the Australia Group.

And so we will approach the BWC Review Conference with clear aims to strengthen the treaty and ensure its continuing relevance to the security needs of its parties.

To this end, Australia will be encouraging States Parties to fulfill their obligations under the Convention and UNSCR 1540 to prohibit and prevent the development and production of biological agents and toxins.
Of particular importance is the need for States Parties to examine national implementation of the Convention.

States need to have in place the necessary legislative, administrative and enforcement measures to ensure effective implementation of the BWC and confidence between its states parties.

With this in mind, Australia will propose that States Parties designate a national authority to coordinate domestic compliance with the BWC and act as a single liaison point for contact between States Parties.

And we will also encourage a close examination of the BWC Confidence Building Measures.

The CBMs are a vital transparency measure, but we must increase the participation in and the value of the CBM process to ensure its continued relevance in an environment of rapidly evolving security threats and technology.

Madam Chair

National implementation of the BWC is vital to its continuing relevance. But we must also take care of the institution of the Convention itself.

Australia has found the intersessional process since the fifth Review Conference to be valuable.

We look to a decision this year on a further, focused intersessional process, leading to the Review Conference in 2011.

Such a process should have practical benefits for implementation of the Convention and which meet the security needs of States Parties.

Moreover, this process should be assisted by a continuation and enhancement of the support provided to States Parties through the BWC Meetings Secretariat.

Not only could such a unit assist with meetings, but it might also help in such areas as universalisation and CBM management.

Madam Chair

The BWC is strong but we must do more to realise its universalisation and in turn its effectiveness against the spread of biological weapons.

With this in mind, Australia will put forward an Action Plan for the Universalisation of the BWC at the Review Conference.

The Plan will offer clear and practical steps States Parties can take to encourage and assist states to join this vital Convention.
Australia's Action Plan is just one example of the positive approach States Parties are taking to the Review Conference.

Australia, with Japan, Canada, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Norway and New Zealand — the JACKSNNZ — has already begun preparation of papers on other issues.

And we welcome the contributions of the EU and Latin American countries to prepare for the meeting.

We sincerely hope that with such a positive approach, States Parties will make the most of the BWC Review Conference to strengthen global defences against the proliferation of Biological and Toxin Weapons.

I thank you.