STATEMENT BY

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PERMANENT MISSION OF CANADA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS, GENEVA

DURING THE

THEMATIC CLUSTER DEBATE: OTHER WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION
OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE, UNGA 61

NEW YORK, 11 OCTOBER 2006

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DÉCLARATION DE

GILLIAN FROST
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AUPRÈS DES NATIONS UNIES À GENEVE

PENDANT

LE DÉBAT THÉMATIQUE SUR D'AUTRES ARMES DE DESTRUCTION MASSIVE
LA PREMIÈRE COMMISSION, ANG 61

NEW YORK, LE 11 OCTOBRE 2006
Mme. Chair:

This debate comes at an important time in the international security agenda. We must ensure that our two legally binding mechanisms – the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) – remain as pertinent as ever to our security.

Next month, States Parties to the BTWC will convene in Geneva for the 6th Review Conference. Ambassador Khan of Pakistan, the President-designate of the Conference, has been working diligently to create the proper environment and conditions for success. He has established reasonable objectives, and we fully share his commitment to achieving a positive outcome. We urge all States Parties to give him their unqualified support in these efforts.

There have been significant contributions made to this end. Japan, for example, hosted a conference in February of this year aimed at developing an open dialogue on ways and means to strengthen the norms and implementation of the Convention.

Canada has likewise contributed. We have put forward a package of measures to build accountability within the Convention. Our point of departure is that States Parties to the Convention are accountable to one another in implementing the obligations they each have accepted in becoming States Parties and in adopting commitments undertaken together in subsequent Review Conferences. From this perspective, we have identified four areas in which efforts to strengthen the BTWC could be further pursued: national implementation, confidence-building measures, implementation support and annual meetings.

While the measures we are proposing enjoy wide support among States Parties, they are not meant to be exhaustive. We note that other States Parties, following a similar approach, have put forward important concrete proposals of their own. We should examine carefully all efforts and ideas that will take us towards our common goal of a strengthened Convention.

We are working closely with other States Parties in the run-up to the Review Conference. Through such collaboration, we hope to bring increased weight and focus to proposals that build on our “accountability framework”. Most recently, Canada co-sponsored a conference at Wilton Park in the UK that brought together a broad range of government, private sector and academic experts to examine issues surrounding BW and CW disarmament and non-proliferation.

Turning to the subject of chemical weapons disarmament, we must not become complacent. While the CWC has become a model of a verifiable disarmament agreement, it still faces important challenges.

Next month, and again in December, States Parties will be asked to address the question of extensions to destruction deadlines. While we might understand the circumstances that have contributed to the necessity for some possessor states to invoke the extension provisions of the Convention, we do not easily accept this request.

Even this five year, one-time-only extension may not be sufficient to ensure the total destruction of all existing stockpiles of chemical weapons. We therefore encourage possessor
states to redouble their efforts to rid the world of the threat of chemical weapons by destroying their stockpiles as quickly as feasible.

The Chemical Weapons Convention will have its Second Review Conference in April 2008 - some eighteen months from now. It is not too soon to begin taking stock of the Convention's implementation and examining how States Parties might best ensure its continuing relevance as a key element of our security.

Mme. Chair:

I would be remiss if I did not compliment the extensive efforts by Director General Pürner and the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW in pursuing an effective program of universalisation for the Convention.

With the recent accession of its 180th member, the CWC is approaching true universality – thanks to the dedicated work of many people. We will continue to support such efforts until every country has become a State Party and is fully implementing their obligations under the Convention.

Mme. Chair:

The arms control and disarmament agenda has suffered disappointments in recent years. We have not been able to achieve the objectives we have set for ourselves.

We cannot let this happen again with the BTWC Review Conference. Canada is committed to working closely with Ambassador Khan and all the other States Parties to help build a more secure world for all.

Thank you