Mr. Chair

The Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention are essential instruments in seeking the goal of a world free of weapons of mass destruction. They significantly contribute to our common security and have established fundamental norms on disarmament and non-proliferation.

An integral part of the two conventions is economic and technological development through cooperation in the field of peaceful chemical and biological activities, as set out in Article XI of the CWC and Article X in the BWC. There have been different views on these articles in the past, as there have been perceptions that the non-proliferation regime, in particular the UN Security Council resolution no. 1540, has the effect of limiting the developing countries’ access to the benefits stemming from cooperation in chemical and biological sciences.

These perceptions should be recognised, but from a Norwegian perspective, we truly believe that all nations will gain from improved non-proliferation efforts at national level. Rather than being constrained by the non-proliferation regime, we think that improved national non-proliferation measures can help facilitate the implementation of the articles X of the BWC and XI of the CWC.

However, we have seen that many countries find it useful to seek assistance on how to meet the obligations of the Conventions concerning national implementation measures. Against this background, Norway has contributed to a number of projects and programmes.

(Check against delivery)
Under the CWC, Norway supports OPCW efforts under the Africa Programme to strengthen cooperation with Africa, through assistance in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and enhancement of national capabilities in relation to articles VII, X, and XI of the Convention.

As to the BWC, we are very pleased with the implementation of the work programme that was successfully adopted at the BWC Review Conference in 2006. One of the main topics last year was biological safety and security. In promoting these issues, Norway has enjoyed excellent cooperation with Indonesia. In June 2008, Norway and Indonesia together with the Implementation Support Unit of the BWC organised a regional workshop on the topic in Jakarta. This initiative was followed up with an international workshop with more than 40 countries participating in Oslo in June this year. Particular focus was placed on reducing biological risk by building capacity in health security. The intention was to contribute to BWCs intercessional programme of work. Another important purpose was to support the Foreign Policy and Global Health Initiative. This calls for greater awareness of the links between foreign policy and global health issues. Brazil, France, Indonesia, Norway, Senegal, South Africa and Thailand are part of this initiative.

The Oslo workshop proved to be a successful exercise in sharing experiences on practical steps to implement article X of the Convention. Further, it underlined the importance and relevance of deepening international cooperation to strengthen disease surveillance and promote health security.

Mr Chair
Let me make a few comments on the two Conventions.

In our perspective - the CWC has proved to be a successful multilateral tool. Yet we recognise that more efforts are needed to ensure that the CWC meets its full potential.

Firstly, if we want to achieve a world free of chemical weapons we must continue working to universalise this instrument.

Secondly, it is imperative that existing stocks of chemical weapons are destroyed within agreed time limits. We encourage countries concerned to do their utmost in this respect.

Thirdly, there is a need to further refine the verification and inspection mechanism of the Convention. Challenge inspections should be used when needed.

Fourthly, we must ensure that the use of non-lethal gases such as riot control agents are in conformity with the provisions on the Convention and does not have unacceptable humanitarian consequences. We recognise that there are different views on this issue, but we need to explore ways to find common ground.
With respect to the BWC, Norway fully supports the implementation of the intersessional programme adopted at the 2006 Review Conference. The outcome document of the Oslo workshop in June this year is a substantial input for the deliberations at the Meeting of States Parties to be held in December. In this respect, let me underline that Norway is very pleased with the support provided by the Implementation Support Unit in all our activities.

The lead-up to the 2011 Review Conference provides us with an opportunity to deliberate on ways to further strengthen the BWC, such as measures to verify compliance to the Convention. Part of this exercise should also be a consideration on how to make better use of the confidence building measures. Norway is pleased to announce our cooperation with the Geneva Forum, Germany and Switzerland in organizing three workshops focusing on “options and proposals to revise the mechanism of Confidence Building Measures.” We regard these meetings to be a timely opportunity to contribute in a concrete and substantive way to the further strengthening of the BWC.

Hence, I need not hide the fact that Norway urges all States Parties to annually submit their CBMs.

This brings me to the final issue: Norway would like to emphasise the importance of strengthening partnerships and networks across regions. We are aware of the regional divisions that sometimes occur in the discussions. However, as the Review Conferences of the Conventions in the past have proved, when countries focus on common ground, important results can be achieved. This requires continued and enhanced cooperation, dialogue and the sharing of national experiences between developed and developing countries.

Lastly, a few words on outer space.

Norway attaches great importance to preventing an arms race in outer space in order to strengthen strategic stability and ensure peaceful exploration and peaceful uses of outer space. To this end, Norway notes the draft treaty submitted by China and the Russian Federation on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force Against Outer Space Objects. We look forward to the deliberations on this draft according to the Programme of Work of the CD.

Norway also notes the draft Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities elaborated by the EU, which we will study carefully.

Thank you Mr. Chair