



5th Review Conference of the States Parties to the BTWC

Statement by Belgium on behalf of the EU

19 November 2001

(unofficial translation)

Mr Chairman,

1. On behalf of the EU, I should like to congratulate you upon your election to the Chair of this Review Conference, whose work we firmly believe you will be able to steer successfully. You have our full confidence and support.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union - Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia - and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey have expressed the wish to align themselves with this statement.

Mr Chairman,

2. Since the 4th Review Conference, and in particular in the past year, important events have taken place which are directly relevant to the BTWC.
3. I am referring first of all to the terrorist acts which struck the US on 11 September, as well as the anthrax attacks, which deeply shocked us all. The European Union condemns terrorism in every form. It expresses its solidarity with the American people and the government of the United States. It believes that disarmament and non-proliferation on a general and multilateral basis are today more than ever essential in order to deny terrorists and terrorist organisations any access to more powerful means to implement their abominable activities.
4. The EU will continue to support fully international efforts in the fields of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. Combating terrorism that makes use of biological and toxic weapons is a duty for all States Parties to the BTWC. The international community is entitled to expect that the States taking part in this Conference will spare no effort to prevent biological weapons from being used by terrorists. At the same time, the Review Conference of the BTWC presents us with an excellent opportunity to reinforce the multilateral system of disarmament and non-proliferation. The EU also appeals to States Parties to adopt, during this Conference, concrete measures in the fight against biological weapons.

Mr Chairman,

5. In the five years following the 4th Review Conference, the EU and its Member States have taken an active part in the negotiations on a legally binding Protocol establishing a regime to strengthen confidence in the implementation of the Convention. During that time considerable progress has been made in the negotiations. In its conclusions of 11 June 2001, the Council of the European Union confirmed its commitment to contribute to drawing up a Protocol including the set of concrete measures which the

EU's Common Position of 17 May 1999 defined as essential for the establishment of an instrument which would effectively reinforce the Convention.

6. We deeply regret that during the 24th session of negotiations, the Ad Hoc Group was not able to conclude an agreement on such an instrument to reinforce the Convention. The EU considers it essential that the Ad Hoc Group's mandate - which had been unanimously agreed at the 1994 Special Conference, and which remains fully in force - be successfully implemented.

Mr Chairman,

7. The Review Conference must be the opportunity to give a new impulse to our work by defining a series of commitments and additional measures that States should adopt in order to strengthen the implementation of the Convention in all of its provisions: compliance with the fundamental norm defined in article I, non-proliferation and export controls, measures in case of concerns over compliance with the Convention (e.g. investigation measures), technical assistance and international cooperation. Some of these measures will need to be detailed further. This should be the subject of our work after this Conference. We are indeed convinced that a balanced and flexible approach between cooperation, transparency and compliance measures will represent a key formula in future multilateral negotiations.
8. The decision taken at the 3rd Review Conference in 1991 to enlarge the scope of application of the politically binding confidence-building measures agreed upon at the 2nd Review Conference in 1986 was unanimously confirmed at the 4th Review Conference. Given that the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction generally and biological weapons in particular has recently been given its full significance, the EU appeals today to all States Parties to cooperate fully and regularly in the exchange of information.
9. In the coming years the confidence-building measures will contribute decisively to enhance the - essential - transparency between the Contracting Parties. In practice, these confidence-building measures are still not universally implemented. Furthermore, modifications could be brought to some so as to ease their implementation from a technical point of view. Finally, the EU proposes that some of these confidence-building measures be made legally binding. The EU is in favour of taking measures to make this instrument more universal and transparent.
10. The EU believes, however, that these confidence-building measures will only prove fully useful in the wider context of legally binding measures aimed at strengthening the Convention in a multilateral framework.

Mr Chairman,

11. The EU appeals to the States which have not yet adhered to the Convention or which have not yet ratified it, to do so as soon as possible. Now more than ever it is important to close ranks to confront the new threat. It welcomes the accession of five new States since the 4th Review Conference in 1996. The EU also invites the States Parties to the Convention which have not yet ratified the 1925 Geneva Protocol on the Prohibition of

the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, to do so as soon as possible, and those who maintain reservations to withdraw them as soon as possible.

12. The EU calls upon all the States Parties to work together in a constructive manner so that this Review Conference adopt a Final Declaration substantially strengthening the Convention. The European Union also appeals to all States Parties to have an open mind regarding negotiations in a multilateral framework.
It is essential that the Conference agree to a regular follow-up to the work to enable the States Parties to strengthen the Convention comprehensively. The EU will do its utmost to achieve that objective.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.