

STATES PARTIES TO BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION CONCLUDE PREPARATORY MEETING FOR 2006 COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

Participants Look Ahead to the Sixth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention to Review its Operation and Consider Follow Up Action

28 April 2006

States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) met in Geneva, Switzerland from 26 to 28 April 2006 at the Preparatory Committee for the Sixth Review Conference of the BWC. The Preparatory Committee, under its mandate from States Parties at its last review in 2002, put in place the procedural arrangements necessary for a successful outcome to the Sixth Review Conference. The Committee decided that the Review Conference would be held in Geneva from 20 November to 8 December, and recommended a provisional agenda that provided for:

- Review of the operation of the Convention with a view to ensuring that its purposes are being realised; and
- Consideration of issues identified in the review of the operation of the Convention and any possible consensus follow-up action.

The Committee also considered and agreed upon draft rules of procedure; background documentation; publicity; final documents; appointment of a provisional Secretary-General; and financial arrangements for the Review Conference. The conclusion of the Preparatory Committee meeting marks the beginning of a process for States Parties to review the objectives and provisions of the Convention.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction effectively prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, retention, stockpiling and use of biological and toxin weapons and is a key element in the international community's efforts to address the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The Committee was chaired by Ambassador Masood Khan of Pakistan who has also been nominated as President of the forthcoming high-profile Sixth Review Conference later this year. Seventy-eight States parties participated in the Committee.

The Biological Weapons Convention, which opened for signature in 1972 and entered into force in 1975, is the first multilateral disarmament treaty banning an entire category of weapons. It currently has 155 States parties, with a further 16 having signed but not yet ratified.

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