SOUTH AFRICA

OTHER WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

27 October 2014

Chairperson,

Recent events in the Syrian Arab Republic have, once again, reminded us of the importance of the international instruments governing weapons of mass destruction and the devastating humanitarian consequences associated with the use of such weapons. No cause could ever justify the use of weapons of mass destruction by any actor under any circumstances. To my delegation it is clear that the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction should remain one of our key priorities. This includes achieving the universality and full and non-discriminatory implementation of all the provisions of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), as well as transparent, irreversible and verifiable progress towards nuclear disarmament.

In the area of chemical weapons, we welcome the significant progress made towards the elimination of the chemical weapons programme in the Syrian Arab Republic, consistent with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the relevant decisions by the OPCW Executive Council and the UN Security Council. In this regard, we appreciate the contributions made by States Parties that enabled the total removal of all chemical materials and equipment by the Syrian Arab Republic from its territory before the deadline of 30 June 2014. We look forward towards the early completion of the destruction of the chemical weapon production facilities and encourage all States in a position to do so, to assist Syria in this endeavour.

South Africa was pleased by the successful outcome of the Third Review Conference on the implementation of the CWC, and call on the OPCW and States Parties to work together with the view to implementing the recommendations arising from it. A remaining challenge is that of universality of the Convention and we call on States Parties to redouble their efforts to encourage States not party to the Convention to join without further delay. In this context, South Africa extends its congratulations to Somalia for joining the Convention.

South Africa also calls for the full and non-discriminatory implementation of all Articles of the Convention in order to ensure that it remains relevant to all of its States Parties. We continue to encourage international cooperation and assistance and in this regard call on the Organization to assist the States Parties that have never possessed chemical weapons and do not have declarable chemical activities to develop their chemical capacity and industry. We believe this will significantly enhance the ability of those States Parties to contribute to the maintenance of peace and security, as well as highlight the contribution which the safe use of chemicals can make in meeting developmental needs. In the same vein we would like to emphasize the need for the Organization's continued readiness to provide assistance and protection against chemical weapons attacks and threats to all its States Parties as the OPCW has a particular role in preventing access to chemical weapons by non-state actors and by providing assistance in the event of a chemical attack.
Chairperson,

South Africa remains committed to strengthening the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) to ensure that our common goal of preventing the threat posed by biological weapons is achieved. My delegation remains concerned about the threat posed by naturally occurring organisms, as well as by those that could be deliberately manufactured and manipulated for use as weapons of mass destruction. It is critical that our common goal of eliminating the threat posed by biological weapons is achieved.

Besides the obvious security benefits of the BWC, the Convention also contains important cooperation and assistance provisions that could strengthen the international community’s ability to combat the debilitating impact of disease on the health of people and on the socio-economic development of countries. South Africa therefore believes that greater international coordination and assistance is required to alleviate the burden of threat posed by biological weapons. Initiatives such as the exchange in biological sciences and technology, the promotion of capacity building in the fields of disease surveillance, detection and diagnosis, as well as the containment of infectious diseases, among many others, could be further explored.

Chairperson,

The inter-sessional process agreed to during the 7th BWC Review Conference provides an opportunity for States Parties to strengthen the implementation of the Convention in some important areas. It remains our hope that States Parties would fully utilise the inter-sessional process and measures agreed upon during the Review Conference to advance the aims of the Convention.

In this regard, we welcome the increasing attention given to the developmental and co-operation features of the Convention. In South Africa’s view, Article X should promote the right of States Parties to participate in the fullest exchange of equipment, materials and scientific information for peaceful purposes. Article X is of direct relevance to public health, particularly in the developing world where resources are often scarce and insufficient, and could provide the overlap between international health, technological advancement and the prevention of the spread of infectious diseases worldwide. South Africa is committed to close collaboration with countries worldwide and within the African Continent on the implementation of the Convention and in the advancement of the goals of the BWC.

Chairperson,

In conclusion, the universalisation of the BWC and the CWC is crucial for the effective eradication of all biological and chemical weapons. We therefore call upon those countries not yet party to these Conventions to join without further delay.

I thank you.