

Intervention by H.E. Mr. M. Shameem Ahsan, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN Office and other International Organizations in Geneva, in the thematic discussion on “other weapons of mass destruction” in the First Committee of the 70th UNGA, New York, 22 October 2015

Thank you Ambassador Karel Jan Gustaaf van Oosterom,

As I am speaking for the first time, my felicitations to you on your election as Chair of the First Committee, and my deep appreciation for your successful steering of today’s thematic discussion on non-nuclear weapons of mass destruction. Despite having universal instruments like the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), the world is not yet safe from other WMDs like chemical and biological weapons. Some recent occurrences are a sad reminder of this harsh reality. Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement of Indonesia on behalf of the NAM delivered in this thematic discussion.

Mr. Chair,

Let me reiterate Bangladesh's unflinching commitment towards general and complete disarmament and non-proliferation, which remains a constitutional obligation. This is reflected in the fact that we are signatory to all major multilateral disarmament treaties, including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention (CCW) along with its protocols, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), Anti-Personnel Mines Ban Treaty (APMBT) and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Bangladesh also strongly adheres to the UNSC Resolution 1540 and continues to voice support for a world free of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Mr. Chair,

In 1997, right after ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Bangladesh submitted necessary declaration regarding chemical weapons and their production facilities. To meet the obligations of CWC, "Chemical Weapons (Prohibition) Act 2006" was passed by the Parliament and Bangladesh National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention (BNACWC) was established. Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has already conducted a number of inspections in Bangladesh's various declared facilities (under OCPF category). In continuation of such efforts, Bangladesh is going to organize the 16th Asian Chemical Congress (ACC) from 18-21 November 2015 in Dhaka.

Recently, experts from UNSCR 1540 Committee visited our key national installations to see the security and safeguard measures in place and made some recommendations for improvements. The matter has been addressed in the National Action Plan for ensuring compliance with UNSCR 1540. We also organized a National Workshop with the concerned UN Experts to raise awareness about compliance with UNSCR 1540, including on preventing proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

Mr. Chair,

In line with her accession to the Biological and Toxin Weapon Convention (BTWC) Convention in March 1985, Bangladesh has continued to manifest strong commitment towards total renunciation of Biological and Toxin Weapons, both nationally and internationally. Our main laboratories like the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) and the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) are engaged in extensive international cooperation, particularly with the WHO and the CDC of the US. We have formed a multi-stakeholder National IHL Committee, which deals with all relevant IHL instruments, including the BTWC. Presently we are looking to have a national legislation for the BTWC, as we have one already for the CWC. In that, Bangladesh might need assistance on legislative drafting for which consultation with the ISU of the

BTWC is on in Geneva. In this connection, I reiterate the call by the NAM for effective implementation of Article X of the BTWC through enhancing international cooperation, assistance and exchanges in use of toxins, biological agents, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes. It is an essential part of compliance with the Convention and of realization of the purpose and objective of the Convention. Bangladesh would like to see all non-State Parties of the BWC, signatories and non-signatories, to embrace this international consensus at the earliest by becoming State Parties. Clearly, concluding a non-discriminatory, comprehensive and balanced legally binding agreement on biological and toxin weapons is essential to further strengthen the BTWC.

Mr. Chair,

Because of rapid advances in the field of sciences and the emergence of non-state actors, the threat of chemical or biological weapons is not receding. That is why, we need to redouble our efforts in important areas to ensure effective implementation of these Conventions. we believe the strengthening and universalization of the two key Conventions along with the strict implementation of the UNSC Resolution 1540 is indispensable. If we can do so, we may hope that the scourge of chemical and biological weapons will be eradicated totally from the globe in near future.

Thank you Mr. Chair.
