

**MEETING OF EXPERTS OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE BIOLOGICAL AND
TOXIN WEAPONS CONVENTION
13 -- 24 JUNE 2005**

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Mr. Chairman,

I am delighted for the opportunity to address this Meeting of Experts of the States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. Much has already been said about the topic for this year's inter-sessional meeting, 'the content, promulgation, and adoption of codes of conduct for scientists.'

Mr. Chairman, given this and the short time allocated for presentations in this session, let me offer a few reflections, albeit without much elaboration.

As has been noted by many this week, both the dual use potential of life science knowledge, techniques and materials as well as devising of codes of conduct pose considerable challenges; challenges for scientists and other practitioners and challenges for States Parties seeking to prevent the deliberate spread of disease. Further to this, it is worth noting that interest in codes of conduct in relation to biological weapons is not new. Indeed, for almost as long as there has been concern about the threats posed by biological weapons in modern times, there has been consideration on the responsibilities of scientists. Codes of conduct have long figured into this. Despite that long standing attention, at least to my knowledge of the Western world, in many respects the outcomes of this focus in terms of concrete code measures have been modest.

The reasons for this are many, but I would suggest a crucial one has been the lack of sustained and sufficiently international leadership. Despite notable exceptions, matters involving disarmament and dual use have not figured prominently within the agendas of many of those in the life sciences. So, Mr. Chairman if you were to ask what is the one thing that should come from this year's discussion, I would say it is this: global leadership. Just as we have heard that codes can act to encourage scientists and others to think anew about implications of their work and facilitate long term discussion about issues of social responsibility, so too can the common understanding and effective action about codes produced in this global forum act to encourage individuals and organizations associated with the life sciences to rethink their social responsibility.

A productive and effective discussion is all the more important because the topic of codes has required the involvement of a far more diverse spectrum of individuals and organizations than has typically been the case for past BTWC topics. In my own recent work with practicing scientists and life science organizations regarding codes in the United Kingdom, it is clear that the discussions about codes and biological weapons have led to their first awareness of the activities of the BTWC. Therefore, having mobilized interest and expectations, it would be unfortunate indeed if common understanding and effective action were not produced this year. Delegates, please keep this in mind when this meeting firmly closes its doors next week on many of those whose work will be discussed.

Mr. Chairman, this meeting should also attend to the important role it can and should play in elaborating the meaning of the BTWC. In important respects, the Convention was written for States Parties rather than individuals and leaves standards of appropriate conduct ill-defined. For example, just what constitutes permissible defensive activities has been one matter where the BTWC could be characterized as a disagreement reduced to writing. If this forum cannot move towards common agreement about such issues, do not expect scientists to be able to establish boundaries of permissibility through codes. I welcome the initial contributions States Parties made to move towards further mutual understanding to prevent the legitimate pursuit of national defense to inadvertently foster conditions that might undermine confidence in the BTWC. I hope the current discussions about this topic and others vis-à-vis scientific standards will be taken forward in forthcoming BTWC negotiations.

Finally, Mr Chairman, I would like to offer a final reflection on the discussions so far. Echoing themes raised in one of this week's lunchtime seminars, might I make a plea that in future States Parties seek to marshal evidence regarding the effectiveness of the various code-related initiatives that they have spoken to. As has been abundantly clear in this meeting, there are many types of codes, with different functions, implemented or promulgated in different ways. Those who have analyzed the actual use and operation of codes would suggest that with each option important considerations come into play in ensuring their effectiveness. So what is needed is a further exchange of data regarding how different codes are evaluated. In short, this is a call for evidence based policy.

Mr. Chairman, much has been said of the responsibilities of scientists at this meeting so far, but I hope you will not mind attention to the responsibilities of diplomats.

Mr. Chairman and delegates, many thanks for your attention.