

BTWC SIXTH REVIEW CONFERENCE, 20 NOVEMBER 2006
STATEMENT BY JOHN DUNCAN, UNITED KINGDOM AMBASSADOR
FOR MULTILATERAL ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT

Mr President,

As one of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention's three Depository Governments, the UK is pleased to be participating in this, the Sixth Review Conference of the BTWC, and to be working over the next three weeks with all of you.

I endorse my Finnish colleague's remarks and expression of support for your role, Mr President, in the chair for this important meeting along with his statement on the Conference itself. I would also like to express my delegation's gratitude to the distinguished UN Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, for addressing us this morning and highlighting the important work ahead of us.

Our aim and expectation for the Conference is for a positive and successful outcome. To that end we have, along with our EU partners prepared a number of working papers on a variety of key topics, which we believe are important. We look forward to discussing these in more detail as well as the papers submitted by other countries over the next three weeks. The UK approach to the Review Conference will be one of openness and flexibility, and a willingness to listen to others views in order to reach consensus.

Mr President,

The UK considers it essential that we maintain the authority of the Convention. We believe therefore that it is important for this Conference to complete the traditional review of the operation of the Convention. We want to see a final outcome that reaffirms our unity against biological and toxin weapons in all circumstances, and the value and importance of the Convention and its Articles to national and international security. We should reaffirm our agreement that all scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention and its prohibitions are covered by the Convention as it stands. And we should confirm that we need periodic reviews of the Convention, as we are doing now.

But I should also like to highlight the UK's support for the intersessional work programme that we have undertaken between 2003-2005, which is less traditional. It has proved to be a particularly effective and useful process. Firstly, much valuable information was shared, and much work undertaken on a range of important issues to strengthen the BTWC - work which is continuing to make an impact.

The UK chaired the 2005 meetings on codes of conduct and has been active in this area since. A month ago, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office hosted a successful high-level seminar on codes of conduct at which over 70

academic and government scientists discussed fostering a culture where scientists consider the potential for the misuse of their work, issues related to the implementation of codes of conduct and how to pursue them in the future. We have submitted a national working paper on this to provide you with more detail, which I hope will be available later this week.

But secondly, and more importantly, as my Finnish Colleague has remarked the field of Life Sciences is one of the most dynamic areas of research and development in today's world. The intersessional work programme ensured that a body of officials focussed on how this might effect the BTWC and considered issues relevant to its implementation. The programme established its own identity and rationale and helped to move the debate forward from divisions of the past. Building on this success, the UK firmly believes that a further work programme is desirable to strengthen and enhance implementation of the Convention by all its States Parties at the national, regional and international levels. To that end, with our EU partners we have proposed some topics for further meetings, which we are ready to discuss. We believe too that there is more we can all do to increase the membership of the Convention and to improve States' implementation of its provisions. Working together, with support from colleagues in the Department for Disarmament Affairs, we can maximise our efforts and achieve real progress.

Mr President,

We have a real opportunity of moving forward at this Review Conference. The UK is ready to play its part in that effort and work with others for a successful outcome.