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The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

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Fact Sheet on the Seventh Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

“We must come together to prevent, detect, and fight every kind of biological danger – whether it is a pandemic like H1N1, a terrorist threat, or a treatable disease.”

- President Obama, United Nations General Assembly, September 22, 2011

Today, the States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) are meeting in Geneva for the start of the Seventh Review Conference (RevCon) of the Biological Weapons Convention to evaluate the implementation of the treaty and chart a course for the coming years. To underscore the importance the United States places on the BWC as a critical tool to help counter biological threats, the President has asked Secretary of State Clinton to lead the United States delegation to the RevCon, where she will deliver the opening statement for the United States on December 7th.

Part of a Broader National Strategy

The BWC is a critical venue for advancing objectives set forth in the President's *National Strategy for Countering Biological Threats*, which emphasizes the need for multinational collaboration on concrete activities to help counter biological proliferation and bioterrorism. The three-week BWC Review Conference presents an opportunity for countries to promote real action to improve global response capabilities, reinforce norms against the misuse of biological science, and to help identify and thwart those who would seek to cause harm.

Revitalizing International Efforts to Reduce Biological Threats

The United States believes the BWC should be the premier forum for bringing together the security, health, law enforcement, and science communities to raise awareness of evolving biological risks and how to best manage them. The U.S. believes that revitalized international efforts and a coordinated series of actions can help reduce the threat of biological attacks.

At the RevCon, the United States will seek the endorsement of the BWC States Parties of a work program for the next five years in three broad areas of work that will greatly enhance international efforts to counter biological threats.

- First, the United States is asking States Parties to establish an effort to develop constructive ways to strengthen implementation of the BWC and build confidence that all members are living up to their obligations. The dual-use nature of biological work simply makes it too easy to conceal prohibited activities – so the United States has proposed efforts to promulgate legislative and regulatory frameworks, safety and security measures, outreach to stakeholders, improved annual reporting, and options for addressing compliance concerns.
- Second, the United States is proposing that the RevCon create a working group that will be tasked with taking concrete actions to make the BWC a more robust forum for building global capacities for preventing, detecting, and combating disease outbreaks, regardless of whether they are natural, deliberate or accidental. We need to be prepared, both nationally and internationally, to deal with a biological attack should one occur. The United States seeks to capitalize on synergies between security and public health communities – and to do so through the sort of international cooperation called for in the BWC.
- Third, the United States is asking States Parties to establish a mechanism for assessing developments in science and technology to better understand their potential benefits to the BWC as well as their potential misuse by terrorists or others. It is important for BWC States Parties to have a structured dialogue with the international scientific community on emerging technologies in order to better address the potential for their misuse.

In order to meet these goals, the United States will propose that the BWC RevCon establish a vigorous work program for the next five years that focuses on the common needs and interests of all States Parties in combating biological threats. Pursuing this robust program will help the international community produce concrete results, thereby enabling successful annual Meetings of States Parties and a robust Eighth BWC Review Conference in 2016.

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