

Statement by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)  
to the meeting of experts held under the auspices of the  
Biological and Toxin Weapons  
Convention,  
August 2003

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests and delegates. On behalf of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute - SIPRI - I would like to thank the organizers of this event for arranging this meeting and providing the opportunity to make this statement.

SIPRI attaches great importance to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. The institute believes that multilateral arms control and disarmament regimes continue to have a useful and necessary role in the current international security environment.

This belief includes a recognition that no single form of action or activity can be relied on to provide effective and long-lasting security. The convention is an indispensable contributor to setting international standards of behaviour and an international legal framework, but it cannot stand on its own. The current series of meetings provides a useful forum to consider the role of the convention in the context of other actions or activities that can further the ideals embodied in its text.

True security relies on finding combinations of measures to reduce the threat of proliferation of biological weapons. The most controversial aspect of the current debate is often over proposed combinations of measures, and, in particular, the balance between national and multilateral measures.

However, from any perspective, national implementation measures provide an important contribution to upholding the standards of the convention.

While each state party has its own constitutional and legislative systems, there is much that states can learn from each other about the scope and the operation of legal instruments. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons fulfils a useful role in collecting and comparing national implementing legislation for the Chemical Weapons Convention. As there is no similar organization associated with the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, no comparable effort has been undertaken for this convention.

To facilitate transparency and openness in national implementation, states parties could provide background papers to the November meeting which might include copies of relevant legal instruments that they use to enforce their obligations under the convention. Such papers would illustrate the commitment of states to preventing the horrors of biological warfare.

There are many precedents for such exchanges, most notably and most recently under export control arrangements where such exchanges have led to greater harmonization of legal measures.

A further means of illustrating national efforts by states to further the objects and purposes of the convention would be to encourage increased numbers of returns of information under the systems of confidence-building measures agreed at earlier review conferences.

SIPRI welcomes the 'new process' initiative to hold meetings in each year until the next review conference. The prevention of biological warfare is a global issue and a task that must be undertaken at a number of levels. The 'new process' provides a forum for countries to address politically sensitive issues which might not otherwise be acted on in a constructive, effective manner in bilateral or regional contexts.

The continued active and constructive engagement by states parties in reviewing treaty implementation is therefore imperative to ensure the convention's continued relevance and effectiveness for the future.