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University of London Statement
Biological Weapons Convention
Meeting of States Parties
Geneva, 4 December 2017



Mr Chair, Distinguished Representatives:

The University of London* welcomes your clear statement, Mr Chair, in your letter to States Parties dated 5 September that this MSP has the shared objective of strengthening the BWC. In order to strengthen it, between now and the Ninth Review Conference, the first requirement is to agree a more effective structure for the intersessional process and to ensure that its open-ended working groups and the Implementation Support Unit are securely funded—as outlined in the Joint NGO statement, which we fully endorse. We urge all States Parties to combine their efforts to achieve agreement on a substantive work programme, and then to launch it with a renewed sense of purpose.

There are, moreover, parts of the Convention which hold latent potential, not yet fully realised. In particular, Article V contains possibilities for strengthening the BWC which deserve fuller exploration. Cooperation and consultation, going beyond the CBMs alone, could do much to promote confidence in the Convention. These possibilities need not be limited to just the one procedure identified in 1980 which gave rise to the Consultative Meeting elaborated by the Second and Third Review Conferences. Other procedures and approaches to problem-solving could be developed which would fit equally well within the framework of Article V. In order to exploit the full value of its versatile provisions, we encourage States Parties to undertake a fresh and thorough study of Article V alongside the work of the open-ended working groups.

Recent peer review and compliance assessment exercises undertaken by an increasing number of States Parties are very encouraging in this regard. They promote transparency and build confidence between States Parties, and they demonstrate, and provide reassurance, on implementation. Other approaches also exist. Over the last year, for example, King's College London was invited to visit a set of high-containment labs in Portugal, as well as the Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute in Iran. These occasions promote and encourage transparency in more interactive ways than through annual CBM submissions, and form welcome additions to CBM submissions, and to peer review and compliance assessment exercises.

Trust and transparency in biodefence form significant research interests for King's College London and we welcome opportunities to partner with States Parties as we develop research projects in this area going forward.

Another significant research interest is the historical context of the origins of the BWC. The four-year University College London-Sussex University project to provide a deeper and richer historical analysis of the context and conception of the BWC has recently been completed. Funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the project drew primarily on archival work and oral history. Copies of the final report are available at the back of the room, and more details are available online: www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/cbw

Mr Chair, Distinguished Representatives,
We thank you for your attention.

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* The University of London dates from 1836, and is a major component of the higher education sector in the United Kingdom and beyond. It has evolved into a confederation of academically and financially autonomous colleges, which continue to share some central University of London institutions and a long history of joint endeavours in education and research. University College London (founded 1826) and King's College London (founded 1829) were the original colleges of the University of London, while the London School of Economics & Political Science (founded 1895) joined in 1900.