

Statement
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**Regional Africa Parliamentary Workshop to Promote Universality and Implementation of the
Biological Weapons Convention and Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540
(2004)**
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
17-18 September 2018

Excellencies

Distinguished Members of Parliament

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure and an honour for me to address you on the occasion of this meeting organized by Parliamentarians for Global Action for the purpose of promoting the universality and implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention and implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004).

I commend Parliamentarians for Global Action for organizing this Regional Workshop and I would like to express my thanks to PGA for their campaign in support of the BWC, and to those parliamentarians from around the world who signed the “San Salvador Plan of Action to Promote Universality and National Implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention” at the 37th PGA Annual Forum in December 2015. The Plan of Action demonstrates that support from Parliamentarians is crucial for the negotiation, implementation and sustainability of instruments such as the BWC.

The threat from biological weapons is real. The dramatic consequences of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa serve as a stark reminder of the threat posed to humanity by emerging communicable diseases. More than 11,000 people were killed, 28,000 infected and US\$2.2 billion in economic losses were caused in the countries most affected by the outbreak. In this context, the billionaire and philanthropist Bill Gates has noted that *“Of all the things that could kill more than 10 million people around the world, the most likely is an epidemic stemming from either natural causes or bioterrorism”*.

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) represents one of the fundamental pillars in multilateral disarmament. It was the first treaty to outlaw an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. Since its entry into force in 1975, a total of 181 States have joined the Convention. The Convention is a widely accepted norm against biological weapons with a growing membership. However, in order to make this norm universal and to make clear that *all* States reject the very notion of biological warfare, it is important that all States are party to the Convention. A total of 10 African States have yet to join the BWC – Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Namibia, Somalia, South Sudan and Tanzania.

Tanzania itself took an important step on 16 August 1972 when it signed the BWC, but it is among those States that have yet to ratify the Convention. I was encouraged to hear that in May this year, Mr. Hussein Mwinyi, Minister of Defence and National Service of Tanzania, announced that the BWC

would be tabled in parliament very soon. We were also happy to welcome a Tanzanian expert to the BWC Meetings of Experts in Geneva last month. In addition, the Chairman of the 2018 BWC Meeting of States Parties and I had a productive meeting with Ambassador James Alex Msekela, Permanent Representative of Tanzania to the United Nations in Geneva, earlier a few months ago. I am especially pleased that on these occasions, Tanzania has officially expressed its intention to ratify the BWC in the near future. I therefore hope to have the pleasure to soon welcome Tanzania as a new State Party to the Convention, perhaps even before the Meeting of States Parties in December this year.

I was also very pleased to be informed by PGA that the parliament of the Central African Republic has approved ratification of the BWC. In this regard, I would like to express my appreciation to Deputy Beatrice Epaye for all of her efforts to achieve this result. I hope that the Central African Republic's instrument of ratification of the BWC will soon be formally deposited, so that the Central African Republic can also be welcomed as a new State Party at our Meeting of States Parties in December.

Now, let me turn to the legislators and make a plea for your support: you can play a crucial role in advocating for the ratification and implementation of the BWC. We have seen this in the recent processes in Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia in Africa and also in Nepal, Niue and Samoa in Asia. I would like to thank those involved for their efforts, in particular Peter Barcroft and his team from PGA. The BWC plays a fundamental role in collective security and serves as an internationally recognized forum for cooperation against the threats posed by biological weapons. Moreover, the BWC also supports the development of the peaceful uses of biological science and technology and contributes to strengthening national public health, veterinary, agricultural and emergency-response capacities. I would therefore like to urge you all to become strong advocates for the effective implementation of this treaty and encourage your national governments to join at the earliest possible opportunity.

Finally, allow me to also point out that assistance is available to help your governments with implementation of the Convention's obligations. Other States Parties, as well as the BWC Implementation Support Unit, stand ready to assist States Parties in drafting national legislation and to advise on any other aspects of national implementation. Moreover, States Parties have established a sponsorship programme in order to enable the participation of national experts from developing countries in official BWC meetings and thereby contribute to building national capacities. And the European Union also supports the BWC through a multi-year grant which involves the provision of assistance to ten developing countries, including four in Africa (Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Malawi and Sierra Leone).

I would also like to flag two upcoming activities that we will be conducting in the coming months in Africa. On 3-4 October, in cooperation with the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), we will be organizing a universalization workshop in Djibouti for IGAD Member States, particularly those which have not yet joined the BWC. Later, in mid-December in Addis Ababa, in cooperation with the African Union, we will organize another workshop for the remaining States in Africa which have not joined the BWC. I would encourage all of you coming from the remaining 10 African States not to have joined the BWC to encourage your governments to participate in these workshops and to take steps towards joining the BWC.

I am aware that the expectations and stakes are high. By working together and promoting the noble goals and universality of the Biological Weapons Convention, we can make this world a safer place. I will count on your support.

I wish you success in your meeting.