



Statement by the

Research Group for Biological Arms Control

**Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker Centre for Science and Peace Research at the University
of Hamburg, Germany**

to the Meeting of the States Parties to the
Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

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Geneva

Madam Chairman, Distinguished Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I make this statement on behalf of the Research Group for Biological Arms Control at the Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker Centre for Science and Peace Research at the University of Hamburg in Germany. The mission of our Research Group is to contribute, through innovative research and outreach activities, to the universal prevention of biological weapons development, production, and use. The focus of our activities is twofold. First, we work to prevent the erosion of the universal bioweapons prohibition by opposing activities that violate treaty regulations. Second, we develop new concepts and instruments to monitor activities relevant to bioweapons, and to verify and enforce compliance with the regulations against them.

2013 has shown that strong multilateral arms control regimes are essential instruments in the global security architecture. We can only encourage Member States to the Biological Weapons Convention to develop and decide on effective measures to strengthen the regime. It is high time that biological arms control becomes enabled to react to the rapid development – and inherent potential for misuse – in the area of biotechnology. In contrast to the nuclear and chemical field, biological arms control still offers the rare chance to be implemented as preventive mechanism only. With or without a verification mechanism transparency has to play a central role in the necessary efforts.

One central means in fostering the effectiveness of the regime should be the mechanism of the Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs). The States Parties have agreed to discuss as biennial item of the Intersessional Process the question of how to enable fuller participation in the CBMs. However, we see few ideas of how to convert the mechanism in a way that States see more substantial benefits in participating in the exchange of compliance relevant information. Although we have not recognized promising activities during the Meeting of Experts in August this year, we still hope to see progress in the development of this crucial mechanism.

We applaud those states that participate in the CBM mechanism which remains the only transparency building instrument in the regime. It is, however, not a signal that spreads optimism, when to date only 61 of the total 170 treaty members have submitted a CBM for the year 2013. This is the lowest percentage since 2005 and the lowest participation in absolute numbers since 2006. We observe with concern that obviously a growing number of BWC States regard participation in the mechanism dispensable. Moreover, the number of States who regard the CBM mechanism not only as an inter-state transparency mechanism, but as a means to actively promote public transparency by releasing their CBMs to the general public on the ISU website or by sending their CBM directly to us, has significantly declined from 29 to 24. As in the previous years, the Research Group for Biological Arms Control has summarized the information of the publicly available CBMs in a reader, which is available at the door.

Transparency should, however, not be limited to the CBM mechanism, but should rather be a guiding principle for the entire regime. We invite the distinguished representatives to the side event “Monitoring compliance relevant data – Launch of the Hamburg Research Group's trade monitoring website” on Thursday morning. At this event we will introduce you to an online tool that provides better accessibility of open source information with potential relevance to both the prohibitive norms as of Articles I and III and to the demanding norm as of Article X. The monitoring of global trade flows of dual-use items produces better knowledge on the participation of countries in the increasingly globalised biotechnology market. Monitoring tools cannot substitute verification; however, we think that more efforts should be made to enhance the usability of relevant empirical data as a common base for further political deliberation.

Thank you for your attention!