

STATEMENT AT THE INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION SUPPORTING GLOBAL HEALTH: REDUCING BIOLOGICAL RISK BY BUILDING CAPACITY IN HEALTH SECURITY HELD IN OSLO, NORWAY, 18TH – 19TH JUNE, 2009.

On behalf of the Nigerian Delegation, I wish to extend our heartfelt support and cooperation towards the achievement of the task we have set for ourselves for this workshop. We are confident that through your able chairmanship, we will come to a very successful conclusion.

2. I also wish to extend our heartfelt appreciation to the Government of the Royal Kingdom of Norway, Republic of Indonesia and the Implementation Support Unit of the Biological Weapons Convention for the sponsorship of this workshop. We commend the hardworking team of the ISU of the BWC for their tireless efforts and zeal in the pursuit of the objectives of the Convention.

3. We are not in doubt that current developments in biotechnology have presented unprecedented opportunities as well as dangers for the health and well being of mankind. Even though very historic diseases have been eradicated, new diseases are evolving that would endanger a substantial proportion of the entire human species, and therefore appropriate arrangements for managing the extra-ordinary consequence of diseases have inevitably become necessary.

4. Nigeria remains proactive in its efforts to ensure the full realization of the objectives of the BWC, including the prevention of the use of biological weapons in whatever form or circumstance. That is why we attach the greatest importance to the topics chosen for our focused discussion. The issues of Disaster preparedness and prevention, control of infectious diseases, conflict and Health issues, building capacity in diseases Surveillance, detection and diagnosis and containment are very important to Nigeria.

5. Nigeria, through its National Authority on Chemical and Biological Weapons, the Federal Ministry of Health and the National Emergency Management Agency have established and improved its national capabilities to survey, detect, diagnose, respond and combat infectious diseases. A variety of Ministries, Departments and Agencies are Stakeholders in the

implementation work of the National Authority. They include the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Defence, Police, Customs, National Authority for Food and Drug Administration (NAFDAC), Agriculture, National Universities Commission, the Sheda Science and Technology Centre, and Foreign Affairs. The work of these stakeholders have helped to strengthen the capacity to detect, diagnose and contain potential pandemics. Nigeria has since the 1980s developed a passive surveillance for 21 (twenty one) notable diseases.

6. Nigeria has also been able to secure its boarder against immigrant diseases of pandemic nature such as Severe and Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) the (H1NI) and of recent the Swine Flu.

7. Nigeria has been able to contain bio-threat across its national borders due to the activities of the Epidemics Preparedness and Response Unit (EPR) who works in collaboration with the Ports Authority Health Service. The Ministry of Health in collaboration with the National Emergency Agency (NEMA) respond to any national disaster affecting any part of the country.

8. In preparedness against Chemical and biological Weapons attack, either delibrate or accidental, the National Authority on Chemical and Biological Weapons Convention (NAC&BWC) with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the Federal Ministry of Health jointly organized a simulation exercise for first respondents in disaster management code named "Clean Air" at the Armed Forces Command and Staff College, Jaji in November, 2008.

9. From the outcome of the exercise, it is obvious that Nigeria requires assistance in the form of equipment and capacity building to be able to respond to disasters effectively. In the face of global terrorism and insecurity, realizing the full potential of Article X of the BWC in providing immediate assistance and protection cannot be over emphasized. Our discussion should therefore be aimed at needy States to improve their national preparedness for disease prevention, control of infectious diseases, and capacity for disease surveillance, detection, diagnoses and containment. The full implementation of Article X of the Convention is essential to achieve the objective and purpose of the Biological Weapons Convention.

10. Nigeria has continued to benefit from the very rich international cooperation and Assistance from the member state parties of the BWC. Several Nigerian Personnel have undergone training in diverse fields in the implementation of the Convention and related areas. More of such assistance is needed in order to develop frameworks for diseases surveillance in humans, animals and plants, and to support programmes for effective responses at the national, bilateral, regional and multi lateral levels, including entering into appropriate agreements that would promote the regular exchange of scientific and technical information in these fields.

11. The Nigerian delegation looks forward to a positive outcome to this workshop, and stands ready to support all processes and initiatives that could strengthen the implementation of the BWC.

12. Thank You.