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**Enhancing international capabilities for responding to, investigating
and mitigating the effects of cases of alleged use of biological or toxin
weapons or suspicious outbreaks of diseases**

Submitted by China

1. Since the start of the new century, global security has been growing increasingly unpredictable and terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have become issues of common concern to all countries. Developments in the international situation highlight the importance and urgency of strengthening the effectiveness of international arms control treaties, including the Biological Weapons Convention. The discussion on enhancing international capabilities for responding to, investigating and mitigating the effects of cases of alleged use of biological or toxin weapons or suspicious outbreaks of diseases at this session is very necessary and pragmatic. China's views and suggestions are as follows:

2. The purpose and objective of the Convention is to completely eliminate biological weapons, which is also a consensus reached by the international community for years. Article VI of the Convention clearly stipulates that any State party to this Convention which finds that any other State party is acting in breach of obligations deriving from the provisions of the Convention may lodge a complaint with the Security Council of the United Nations. Each State party to this Convention undertakes to cooperate in carrying out any investigation that the Security Council may initiate. The 1987 General Assembly resolution 42/37 and the report of the Secretary-General on guidelines and procedures for investigating the possible use of chemical and biological weapons (A/44/561) have also outlined some proposals on the ways to conduct investigations. States parties may exchange views on the above proposals in accordance with the Convention.

3. Suspicious outbreaks of disease are those that have abnormal pathogenic, aetiological or epidemiological characteristics. Since suspicious outbreaks of disease in each country have different aetiological and epidemiological characteristics, it is hard to set up a universally applicable standard. Therefore, if any State party to the Convention has concerns about a suspicious outbreak of disease and asks the Security Council for an investigation, it should provide valid evidence and detailed data to prove that the relevant outbreak of disease is not just natural but directly linked to activities prohibited under the Convention. In addition, States parties should have adequate coordination and communication among themselves before launching investigations so as to establish the facts.

4. Investigations into the alleged use of biological weapons or suspicious outbreaks of disease must be in strict compliance with the Convention and at the same time be fair, reasonable and effective. By so doing, the legitimate and equitable rights of the investigated State party can be protected, while avoiding the wasting of investigation resources and unnecessary losses to the investigated State party.

5. In order to enhance the capability for responding to alleged use of biological weapons and suspicious outbreaks of disease, States parties and the international community should work on the following:

(a) Strengthening national legislation and putting in place strict legal systems; training professionals, and allocating more resources so as to provide adequate manpower and material support; enhancing public health infrastructure and improving disease surveillance, prevention and control systems; stepping up scientific research efforts, and boosting disease surveillance and prevention and scientific capability; and enhancing public awareness of self-protection and prevention against disease;

(b) States parties in a position to do so may, at the request of disease-affected States parties, provide financial and technological assistance to the latter. The relevant international organizations may also facilitate the use of their manpower and technological expertise;

(c) The relevant international organizations and States parties may hold workshops and seminars to explore how to mitigate and avoid the undesirable effects of outbreaks of disease.

6. In an increasingly globalized world, outbreaks of infectious disease are not only harmful to a given country's own people, but may spread to other nations. Once a suspicious outbreak of disease is detected, a State party should share relevant information with others, determine the causes and control the disease in a timely and expeditious manner. If the outbreak of disease is beyond its control, it should request assistance from the World Health Organization or other international organizations. Moreover, in accordance with the confidence-building measures stipulated in the Convention, suspicious outbreaks of infectious diseases should be reported to the relevant bodies of the United Nations in a timely manner.
