

**February 2001**

**Civil society organizations call on all governments to reinforce the global ban on biological weapons**

Biological warfare agents are a unique class of weapons, as they include living organisms with the ability to reproduce and perpetuate their destructive mission beyond the intended target area and time. The threat of biological weapon agents to humankind and the environment has led to a global ban of these weapons. The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) of 1975, ratified by 143 States Parties, outlaws the development and possession of all biological weapons.

The last decade has been witness to dramatic and rapid changes in bioscience that are likely to facilitate the development of biological weapons. Civil society organizations around the world are concerned that the BTWC has no mechanism to monitor compliance with the Convention. To solve this problem, States Parties to the Convention established an Ad Hoc Group in 1994 to develop a Protocol to strengthen the Bioweapons Convention. The goal has been to complete the negotiations before the 5<sup>th</sup> Review Conference of the BTWC convenes in Geneva end of this year. We call on all governments to undertake every effort to reach consensus on a strong Protocol, including broad criteria for facility declarations, random visits to all declared facilities, clarification procedures, challenge investigations and an export monitoring system.

The global consensus against the hostile use of living organisms is increasingly endangered. Some programs blur the boundary between peaceful and hostile uses of biological agents, such as pathogenic fungi that are currently being developed for use in drug crop eradication programs. These efforts undermine the global taboo against the development and use of biological weapons.

We call on the 5<sup>th</sup> Review Conference of the BTWC, to be held in November 2001 in Geneva, to address these issues and

- to reiterate the broad prohibition of all non-peaceful applications of living organisms and toxins, regardless of whether they target humans, animals, plants or materials,
- to reaffirm in their Final Declaration that there is no exemption in the BTWC for law enforcement, and
- to state that any use of biological agents against a nation, a regional group or individuals against their will is not a peaceful purpose and thus banned by the BTWC.

Finally, we call on all governments to undertake every step necessary to reinforce the global ban on biological weapons.

**For a world at peace, and a world at peace with the environment,**

**(initial endorsements)**

Ecoropa (International)

GeneWatch (UK)

IATP - Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (USA)

Sunshine Project (International)

WILPF - Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (International)

**Please send all endorsements (+ VIP signatures) to: International Peace Bureau, 41 rue de Zürich, 1201 Geneva, Switzerland. Tel: +41-22-731-6429, fax: 738-9419. Email: [mailbox@ipb.org](mailto:mailbox@ipb.org), web: [www.ipb.org](http://www.ipb.org) *Deadline. 30 March 2001***