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### **Surveillance of infectious diseases**

#### **Submitted by the Chinese delegation**

1. The spread of infectious diseases has become a serious public health problem in today's globalized world. Bioterrorism also poses a serious threat to global security. Coping with these problems requires concerted efforts by the international community. The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) has always played a critical role in the complete prohibition, thorough destruction and non-proliferation of biological weapons. As an important forum for States parties to explore in a multilateral framework effective measures to strengthen the BWC, the Meeting of Experts will help States parties, taking into consideration both the experiences of other States and their specific national situations, to formulate or improve their national implementation systems and thus promote comprehensive, effective BWC implementation.

2. China's practice and proposals with regard to surveillance of infectious disease are as follows:

#### **I. CHINA'S PRACTICE**

##### **A. Surveillance of infectious diseases affecting humans**

3. China has promulgated a series of laws and regulations governing the surveillance of infectious diseases affecting humans: the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act and its Implementation Regulations; Regulations on the Response to Public Health Emergencies; Administrative Measures on the Reporting of Public Health Emergencies and Infectious Disease Surveillance Information; Implementation Measures on the Reporting of SARS Surveillance Information; Certain Measures on the Administration of AIDS Monitoring, and more. China has made efforts to set up a well-functioning system of disease prevention and control as well as medical treatment covering the whole country within three years. It attaches great importance to disease surveillance. It has established a disease reporting system and adopted legal regulations on disease surveillance.

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\* / Reissued for technical reasons.

4. Our principles for reporting infectious diseases affecting humans are: adopting relevant legal regulations; setting up multilevel accountability; quick response; safety and high efficiency. The Ministry of Health is in charge of supervising the reporting of national infectious diseases surveillance information. There are strict time limits for disease reporting. For instance, for patients, virus-carriers or patients suspected of harbouring a Category A infectious disease, SARS or certain Category B infectious diseases as stipulated in the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act, the competent authorities in cities must report the case to higher authorities via the disease surveillance data network within two hours while those in villages must do so within six hours. Disease prevention and control centres at all levels are responsible for the disease surveillance, reporting and administration within their areas of competence. Medical and health services and disease prevention and control centres at county level and above have already adopted direct disease reporting via computer network. Rules stipulate that local public health authorities, upon receiving reports of infectious diseases, must immediately investigate, decide the nature of the disease and take all necessary measures to control it, and report their findings to higher authorities in a timely manner. There are also strict stipulations to regulate information management and on-site investigation of diseases.

5. The Ministry of Health is responsible for notifying and publicizing public health emergencies and outbreaks of infectious disease around the whole country. The Ministry can also authorize competent health authorities of all provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central Government to publicize public health emergencies and outbreaks of infectious disease in their own regions.

#### **B. Surveillance of infectious diseases affecting animals**

6. It is difficult to monitor and control animal diseases in China due to the size of the country and the scale of its poultry production with large regional differences. In order to strengthen the surveillance of animal diseases, the Government has promulgated laws and regulations: the Control of Animal Diseases Act, Animal and Plant Entry and Exit Quarantine Act, Control Measures for Identification of Vaccinated Animals, Regulations on Animal Quarantine and Control Measures for Reported Outbreaks of Animal Diseases. China has also established technical standards for animal infectious disease prevention and quarantine, and animal quarantine and disease-prevention systems at all levels. In order to carry out animal disease surveillance and reporting in a scientific, comprehensive and accurate manner, the Chinese Government promulgated Management Protocols for the National Animal Disease Surveillance System in the year 2002, which set forth strict stipulations on animal disease surveillance subject, means, reporting and administration. China has already established an integrated national animal disease surveillance network, which includes the following:

(a) National Direct Reporting System. Provincial centres for animal disease prevention and control, local animal disease surveillance and report stations and frontier animal disease surveillance stations are responsible for the surveillance and reporting of animal diseases directly to the National Centre for Animal Disease Prevention and Control once animal diseases are detected.

(b) National Multilevel Reporting System. Local veterinary departments are in charge of animal disease surveillance. They report outbreaks of animal disease to higher-level centres and ultimately to the National Centre for Animal Disease Prevention and Control.

(c) Animal Disease Reference Laboratories Reporting System. National animal disease reference laboratories, regional professional laboratories and related laboratories at institutes and universities help collect animal disease information and report directly to the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Centre for Animal Disease Prevention and Control if they detect animal disease.

### **C. Surveillance of plant diseases**

7. China is a large agricultural country. In order to strengthen the control of plant diseases, it has promulgated Regulations on Plant Quarantine, Rules for the Implementation of Regulations on Plant Quarantine, National List of Dangerous Diseases, Pests, Plants and Plant Products Subject to Quarantine on Entry and established a series of standards for plant disease surveillance. In addition, the Government is going to incorporate international phytosanitary measures such as Guidelines for Surveillance, Determination of Pest Status in an Area and Pest Reporting established under the International Plant Protection Convention, into its own national standards.

8. A complete system from central to local government of plant disease surveillance, investigation and control has been established in China so as to ensure agricultural safety by minimizing the effect of plant diseases on agricultural production, protect human life and health and promote agricultural trade. The Government has conducted several nationwide investigations of agricultural plant pests, and effectively controlled the spread of plant pests.

## **II. CHINA'S PERSPECTIVE AND PROPOSALS**

(a) The timely discovery, analysis, reporting and publicizing of diseases help people understand the situation, formulate surveillance plans and act quickly to counter the diseases. They also help scientists to determine the direction and focus of their research. The fundamental purpose of disease surveillance is to prevent and control the spread of disease, but it is also important in the prevention of bioterrorism attacks.

(b) The disease surveillance mechanisms of all States parties are important parts of the global disease surveillance mechanism. In today's globalized world it is important for States to establish and constantly improve their disease surveillance mechanisms for the purpose of strengthening global capabilities to fight infectious diseases.

With regard to the disease surveillance mechanism, laws and regulations are the foundation, while personnel and institutions play the fundamental roles with essential financial and technical support. Taking account of their specific national situations, States parties can establish their own operational surveillance mechanisms to strengthen their ability to cope with outbreaks of infectious diseases in the interests of their own people.

(c) The international community should actively promote and constantly improve cooperation in disease surveillance. States parties should maintain, strengthen and improve notification mechanisms for disease outbreaks and disease-prevention and control measures and enhance consultation, coordination and information-sharing. By continuing to promote technological cooperation and exchanges of personnel, they can share experience in disease

prevention and control and research results. States parties in a position to do so should provide assistance to other States parties in the form of technology exchange, personnel training, financial support as well as international or regional seminars on the basis of equality, cooperation and mutual respect.

(d) States parties should promote cooperation with relevant international organizations. Over the years, intergovernmental organizations such as the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Organization for Animal Health have done a great deal in disease surveillance. States parties can further enhance cooperation with these organizations and make full use of their resources and achievements. They discuss and formulate standards and best practices for disease surveillance in conformity with their national situations on the basis of the standards set by intergovernmental organizations. The organizations can provide technological, financial and information assistance and support to States parties which have difficulty in implementing the relevant standards and best practices.

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