First Meeting
Geneva, 10 – 14 November 2003

Meeting of Experts
Geneva, 18 – 29 August 2003
Items 5 and 6 of the agenda

CANADA’S BIOLOGICAL AND CHEMICAL DEFENCE REVIEW COMMITTEE: TRANSPARENCY MODEL

Prepared by Canada

1. Canada’s longstanding non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament policy includes the promotion of universal, comprehensive and verifiable treaties banning all biological, toxin and chemical weapons. While the risk of CBW proliferation, along with the use of CBW by state and non-state actors, remains, Canada has an obligation to ensure that first responders and members of the Canadian Forces (CF) have adequate training and equipment to protect themselves and Canadians against exposure to chemical and biological agents. This requires undertaking non-prohibited research for defensive purposes.

2. We believe that the Canadian public has the right to be assured that Canada's policy of maintaining only a defensive capability with regard to biological and chemical agents, in line with our domestic and international obligations, is fully respected at all times, and that any research, development and training activities undertaken pose no threat to public safety or the environment.

3. To facilitate this assurance, the Biological and Chemical Defence Review Committee (BCDRC) was established in 1990 by the Minister of National Defence, following a recommendation included in the Barton Report of 31 December 1988, entitled “Research development and training in chemical and biological defence within the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces” (by a former Canadian Disarmament Ambassador).

4. The Committee is mandated to review annually the research, development and training activities in biological and chemical defence (BCD) undertaken by the Department of National Defence (DND) to ensure that these activities are defensive in nature and conducted in a professional manner with no threat to public safety or the environment.

5. The BCDRC is composed of three members. Nominations for BCDRC membership are solicited by the Chairperson, from the Royal Society of Canada, the Canadian Federation of Biological Societies, the Canadian Society of Microbiologists, the Chemical Institute of
Canada, and the Society of Toxicology of Canada. The Committee, consisting of a chairperson and two members representing the disciplines of chemistry, microbiology and toxicology, is appointed for terms of three years by the DM/CDS on the recommendation of the pertinent learned society and the Committee Chairperson.

6. The BCDRC annually:

- **Visits:**
  - the Defence R&D Establishment Canada - Suffield;
  - the Defence and Civil Institute of Environmental Medicine;
  - the Canadian Forces Nuclear, Biological and Chemical School; and
  - at least two other DND Establishments where biological and chemical training is conducted.

- Reviews the annual DND Research and Development Program and approved by the Defence Management Committee.

- Reviews the implementation of the recommendations made in the:
  - Barton Report of 31 December 1988;
  - 1992 Independent Environmental Audit of Defence Research Establishment Suffield (now DRDC - Suffield); and
  - previous BCDRC Reports.

- Examines the DRDC - Suffield and DCIEM Annual Reports, activities and records of the Human Research Ethics and Animal Care Committees and the current research and development contracts and publications lists.

- Is briefed by and questions Canadian federal government officials responsible for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

- Submits a report of their activities and findings and recommendations to the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) and the Deputy Minister (DM) of National Defence.

7. Openness and transparency are key aspects of this process. The impartial, knowledgeable, outside annual review provides oversight and recommendations, to aid the conduct of research and development. To provide transparency, the BCDRC’s annual reports are made public and available on the web at [http://www.vcds.dnd.ca/bcdrc/index.html](http://www.vcds.dnd.ca/bcdrc/index.html). In addition, a copy is provided to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).