

Seventh session
Geneva, 14 July - 1 August 1997

Working paper submitted by the Friend of the Chair
on Definitions

Addendum

D. [THRESHOLDS]⁸

[Each State Party can store at facilities, for the purposes of developing and testing means of protection against biological weapons, established threshold quantities of biological materials containing listed agents. Specific values of threshold quantities shall be determined in accordance with the Annex IV. These thresholds do not cover quantities that are used in day to day work and for the production of immune biological, medical and other preparations.]

[Thresholds are meant to limit the scope of Article I of the Biological Weapons Convention and as such are of no value for this Protocol.]

⁸[Views were expressed that the application of threshold limits to the possession of biological agents and toxins is not a useful means to strengthen the Convention and could undermine the provisions of Article I; this would clearly be outside the mandate of the Group. Peaceful quantities of an agent cannot be defined independently of the particular circumstances of the use, which means that fixed thresholds cannot be used. There would be a risk of a threshold for work for defence purposes being used to conceal offensive activities. The application of threshold limits could provide inaccurate impressions of the scale of activities at a facility because the self-replicating nature of micro-organisms means that an agent amount at or below a threshold could be exceeded within a matter of hours. Finally, even small quantities of biological agents and toxins could, depending upon their intended purpose, violate the object and purpose of the Convention.]
