Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of my delegation I would like to extend to you my warmest congratulation on your designation as the Chairman of the 2004 Meeting of Experts as well as the Meeting of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention. I believe that your diplomatic skills and experiences in the BWC Ad Hoc Group negotiation in particular, will facilitate our deliberation for a successful conclusion. I assure you the full cooperation of my delegation.

Mr. Chairman,

The Biological Weapons Convention as part of international arms control system has played an important role in prohibitions, destruction and non-proliferation of biological weapons. After failure and suspension of seven years negotiations on the Protocol to the Convention, world has faced rapid development of biotechnology and escalation of bio-terrorism threats thus it has become more imperative and important to discuss, within a multilateral legally binding frameworks, the concrete measures to strengthen the effectiveness of the Convention.

The preference of a certain country for unilateral actions to combat weapons of mass destruction including biological weapons cannot obliterate the primacy of the principles and rules of multilateralism on this matter. The lack of multilateral coordination will result in the failure of the regime established by the BWC. Legitimate action in the area of international security must be founded on multilateral agreements.

The Islamic Republic of Iran being one of the main victims of the Weapons of Mass Destruction has always supported the international measures against the WMD and has always played an active role in the deliberations and negotiations in the disarmament fora. While refraining from getting into details of the disarmament
policies of my country and serious concerns over the current international security environment, I would like to draw the kind attention of the participants to a few general remarks:

It is essential that the international community finds solution to combat the threat or threat of use of biological weapons. Implementation of the relevant provision of the Convention should not overshadow the inalienable rights of the States Parties, as stipulated in Article X the BWC, to have access to biological agents and biotechnology for peaceful uses. The Convention has to be considered in its totality therefore, both the promotional and the regulatory pillars have to be equally dealt with.

We are of the belief that any international mechanism for the surveillance, detection, diagnosis and combating infectious disease as well as mechanism for investigation and mitigating the effects of cases of alleged use of biological or toxin weapons or suspicious outbreaks of diseases, could be universally acceptable and effectively applicable only if it is established as the result of multilateral negotiations.

Although the BWC lacks a verification mechanism, we do believe that assigning security and politically oriented responsibilities, such as investigation of suspicious cases of use of biological weapons, to certain international organizations such as WHO, puts the humanitarian and fundamental objectives and mandate of these organizations in jeopardy.

While we appreciate the attempts made by the Secretariat for preparation of the background papers, I would like to put on the record that these papers do not constitute the basis for our deliberations since they have not been discussed and agreed upon by the States Parties to the Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

The Expert Meeting is entrusted to work on the issue of alleged use of biological or toxic weapons. However, it should be recalled that the Convention does not address the prohibition of the “use” of these horrifying weapons. Even though according to the Geneva Protocol of 1925, the “Use” is prohibited, but regrettably some States Parties have still kept their reservations to that effect, that is keeping the right of retaliation for any case of use against them. This issue was, for the first time, brought to the attention of the States Parties by the Islamic Republic of Iran during the Fourth Review Conference and a proposal for the amendment of the Convention was made.

As far as the issue of assistance is concerned, it is important for the States Parties to reaffirm their commitment to undertakings under Article VII to provide and to support assistance in cases where any State Party to the Convention is exposed to the danger as a result of the violation of the Convention. Each State Party in position to do so could identify possible type of medical, veterinary or other assistance that might be made available. It’s appropriate for each State Party, to the extent possible, to provide and to contribute to the training and operation of national and/or international rapid response teams for emergency medical assistance, as well as necessary materials and equipment, especially for detection.

My delegation is well prepared to actively participate in this Expert Meeting, with due consideration of the above mentioned principles, contributing to its successful conclusion.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.