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The International Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction considers Nuclear and Biological Weapons at Session hosted by University of British Columbia

The 15-member International Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, headed by Dr Hans Blix, concluded its third session on November 11 after wide-ranging discussions, including expert presentations from the Canadian government, the University of British Columbia, the Monterey Institute for International Studies, the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre, and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The Commission was warmly welcomed by the Honourable Iona Campagnola, Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia and Mr Larry Campbell, Mayor of Vancouver. Dr Blix expressed the Commission's appreciation and particularly thanked the Simons Foundation and the Liu Institute for Global Issues for their generosity in funding and enabling the WMD Commission to meet in Vancouver.

The three-day meeting in Vancouver was part of the Commission's two-year undertaking to assess current and future threats from nuclear, chemical, biological and other potential weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. The WMD Commission, which comprises eminent military, political, scientific and academic figures from around the world, will present its final report to the United Nations Secretary-General in early 2006.

As part of its mandate to develop realistic proposals to enhance international security, the Commission focused in this Session on the humanitarian and security threats posed by nuclear and biological weapons, and heard arguments on how the international community, national governments, industry and civil society could better monitor and ensure full compliance with nonproliferation and disarmament treaties and objectives. Underscoring the importance of the existing agreements covering these weapons, the Commission discussed ways in which the treaties could be strengthened so that neither states nor nonstate actors would be able to further develop, acquire or use such deadly weapons, whether in acts of war or terrorism.

Concluding the meeting, Dr Blix said, "This has been a very full and productive meeting, providing many useful ideas and much food for thought that the Commission will carefully analyze over the next few months. We have benefited greatly from the input and support we have received from our Canadian partners, both in government and civil society, representing Canada's continuing outstanding record in arms control and disarmament."

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