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# Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

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## 2013 Meeting

Geneva, 9–13 December 2013

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

**Standing agenda item: cooperation and assistance, with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation and assistance under Article X**

## Report on cooperation and Assistance under Article X of the Convention

Submitted by Iraq

### I. Background

1. The BTWC Seventh Review Conference in December 2012 in Geneva confirmed the importance of implementation of Article X and recalled that States Parties have a legal obligation to facilitate and have the right to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the use of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins for peaceful purposes and not to hamper the economic and technological development of States Parties. The Conference reaffirmed the commitment to the full and comprehensive implementation of this Article by all States Parties.
2. The Conference encouraged States Parties to provide at least biannually appropriate information on how they implement this Article to the Implementation Support Unit within the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, and requested the Implementation Support Unit to collate such information for the information of States Parties. The Conference welcomed the information provided by a number of States Parties on the cooperative measures they have undertaken towards fulfilling their Article X obligations.
3. This report provides information summaries about the cooperation with States Parties to the BW Convention regarding cooperation programmes and assistance in building and development national capacity in the field of bio-risk management, import and export mechanism of biological dual-use items.

### II. Promoting cooperation and assistance

4. Since 2004, the Iraqi National Monitoring authority has started to set up several bilateral cooperation programmes with the other States Parties to the BTWC and

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international organizations such as the United States, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Norway and the 1540 (2004) Committee, in addition to the European Union through the CBRN centres of excellence to assist in the implementation of the BWC Convention. This includes facilitating the exchange of experiences, sharing lessons learned concerning the technological information for the use of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins for peaceful purposes and assisting in building national capacity in the biological field and public health. A significant part of this cooperation is focused on laboratory bio-risk management, disease detection and control. Specific activities included:

(a) bio-risk assessments followed by biosecurity upgrades in public and animal health laboratories;

(b) sustainable bio-risk management capacity building through biosafety and biosecurity technical training as well as facilitating a broader awareness of the biological non-proliferation issue;

(c) enhancing public and animal disease and control capabilities through international scientific and technical exchanges; and

(d) laboratory bio-risk management awareness training on facilitating the use of the new standards for biosafety and biosecurity, with a view to enhancing national disease control and preparedness, supporting the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention.

5. The cooperation programmes covered a number of aspects relating to the BW Convention and control biological materials, including development and implement appropriate, sustainable and effective laboratory biosafety and biosecurity measures, guidelines, training courses, building national capacity in the field of bio-risk management according to the international standards to reduce biological threats, prepare for – and respond to – a biological incident, disease surveillance, detection, response. Iraq now participates in more than 10 joint programmes with EU CBRN centres of excellence. Some of those projects address issues such as: knowledge development and transfer of best practices on biosafety, biosecurity and bio-risk management; strengthening laboratory biosafety and biosecurity; creation of an international network of universities and institutes for raising awareness on dual-use concerns in biotechnology.

6. The outcomes of this cooperation led to hold and organize several outreach workshops, consultations and training for competent authorities in the relevant sectors and for laboratory managers/staff at the national levels, aiming at a deeper understanding of bio-risk reduction practices and their effective implementation in laboratories and other facilities, including during transportation as appropriate.

### **III. Conclusion**

7. The outcomes of this cooperation can complement and reinforce national implementation measures of the BW Convention and assist in capacity building, in biosafety and biosecurity, and for detecting, reporting and responding to outbreaks of infectious disease or biological weapons attacks, including in the areas of preparedness, response and crisis management and mitigation; in addition to increase awareness of the employees concerning the importance of biosafety and biosecurity measures and procedures in order to ensure the safety of workers and the security of pathogens and toxins in laboratories and facilities and during transportation, to prevent the access of non-state actors to the biological sensitive materials, loss, theft or diversion and then use them for purposes prohibited by the BW Convention and Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004).