

Ninth Review Conference 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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Follow-up to the recommendations and decisions of the Eighth Review Conference and the question of future review of the Convention

Outline of Proposals to Enhance the Institutional Machinery of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) in the Context of Cooperation and Assistance Under Article X

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I. Introduction

1. Since the commencement of the Intersessional Process (ISP) of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) in 2018, the Meeting of Experts on Cooperation and Assistance, with a Particular Focus on Strengthening Cooperation and Assistance Under Article X (MX1) has facilitated an expert-driven exchange among States Parties, regional groups, experts and advocates.
2. This exchange has yielded various proposals on enhancing the institutional capacity of the BWC with the view to strengthening its implementation, particularly in the context of cooperation and assistance under Article X.
3. Having concluded the three iterations of MX1 under the ISP, States Parties are now in a position to seriously consider the proposals to take forward the work of States Parties in improving cooperation and assistance in the context of Article X. Such consideration takes a new level of urgency given the growing recognition that the weaknesses in the implementation of Article X have been evident during the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. With the view to aiding States Parties in undertaking decisions at the Review Conference, this paper outlines the ideas put forward during the ISP, particularly in MX1, to enhance the Convention's institutional machinery, implementation, and relevance to the Sustainable Development Agenda.

II. Clusters of proposals

5. The proposals can be organized into the following four clusters:

A. Strengthening existing measures

6. The first cluster of contributions refers to proposals to optimize the current measures that are in place to enhance the implementation of the Convention.
7. These proposals include the following:
 - (a) Optimization of the value of national reports;



- (b) Upgrade of the functionality of the database on cooperation and assistance in accordance with Article X;
- (c) Mapping of gaps, needs, and assistance offers.

8. These measures recognize the value of the tools that are currently available to the Convention, but also the need to more effectively leverage them with the view to better directing and mobilizing resources and coordinating assistance activities.

B. New measures to institutionalize a more programmatic approach to implement cooperation and assistance under the Convention

9. The second cluster of proposals builds on existing mechanisms with practical steps towards better institutionalizing work under Article X, such as the following:

- (a) Establishment of a Cooperation Committee;
- (b) Establishment of a position of Cooperation Officer at the Implementation Support Unit (ISU);
- (c) Adoption of resource mobilization guidelines;
- (d) Voluntary Trust Fund for Implementation of Article X;
- (e) Adoption of Article X Action Plan;
- (f) National ownership, including National Action Plans.

10. These proposals, which will require bridging with each other, aim for a robust and dedicated structure for promoting cooperation and assistance.

C. Concrete, ready-to-be rolled out, scale-able initiatives that could become organic features of cooperation in the BWC context

11. The third cluster of proposals concerns practical, fit-for-purpose initiatives that could possibly become organic features of cooperation in the BWC context. They are well-developed ready-to-roll and stand-alone initiatives in response to known needs for assistance, and may be pursued independent of the progress of institutionalization as foreseen in clusters 1 and 2. These include the following:

- (a) Establishment of a database on regulatory frameworks for biosafety and biosecurity and training manuals that will help States Parties in crafting tailored biological risk management systems;
- (b) Training and logistical resources for establishing, operating and maintaining laboratories for high-consequence pathogens in resource-limited settings.

12. These concrete proposals appear ready to be rolled out and are scalable.

D. Broad proposals on how to better synergize the web of partnerships and collaboration between and among stakeholders in the BWC community, including international organizations and academic networks

13. The fourth cluster covers proposals that acknowledge that the Convention's work on Article X flourishes through collaboration and consolidation of functional linkages within the web of international organizations and scientific and academic community networks that share many of the Convention's objectives. This includes the following:

- (a) Strengthening global health security architecture and sustainable health security financing as important components of risk mitigation;
- (b) Establishing robust surveillance and early actions for rapid detection and mitigation efforts, taking into account the example of the World Health Organization's Scientific Advisory Group for the Origins of Novel Pathogens

(SAGO) and the work of international organizations such as the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);

- (c) Further strengthening new approaches to mobilizing resources, including public-private partnership, taking into account the example of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovation (CEPI);
- (d) Local and regional ownership to ensure long-term sustainability of activities, stronger partnership between donor and beneficiary States, further coordination among donors, and increased South-South cooperation.

14. Previous BWC discussions have recognized the vitality of existing global, regional and sub-regional platforms and networks and their role in enhancing human resource development in the field of biological sciences and biotechnology in developing states. It is well within the purview of the BWC to intensify dialogue with and support for these platforms, particularly with respect to their aim to promote developing States' capacities to access and optimize technologies of peaceful uses of biological agents, microorganisms and toxins.

III. Conclusion

15. These four clusters of proposals are not mutually-exclusive and have a reinforcing effect on one another. They provide a picture of how a dynamic and organized framework for implementing Article X could look like.

16. Discussions in MX1 must also be integrated with the collective reflections arising from discussions across all the MXs under the ISP. Further, stock-taking on these MX discussions must step up to the dynamic global responses across the multilateral sphere to rapidly evolving developments.

17. At the upcoming Review Conference, States Parties will have an opportunity to further crystalize and to decide on the proposals emanating from the ISP, including these four clusters of proposals that have reached a measure of maturity during the three iterations of MX1.

18. The States Parties' decisions in this regard must be anchored in the twin challenge identified by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his 2018 document "Securing our Common Future, An Agenda For Disarmament": Enhancing the institutional capacity of the BWC, which remains the least institutionalized among all conventions dealing with weapons of mass destruction; and linking the implementation of the objectives of the disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control processes with the Sustainable Development Agenda.
