

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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English only

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Consideration of the factual reports of the Meetings of Experts reflecting their deliberations, including possible outcomes

Proposal for establishment of a database for assistance in the framework of Article VII of the Biological Weapons Convention

Submitted by France and India

I. Introduction

1. Article VII of the BTWC provides that, "Each State Party to this Convention undertakes to provide or support assistance, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, to any Party to the Convention which so requests, if the Security Council decides that such Party has been exposed to danger as a result of violation of the Convention."
2. The implementation of this Article is recognized as a key obligation under the Convention. However as acknowledged by previous outcome documents and discussions in the BWC, there is a lack of detailed procedures or mechanisms for its implementation. Thus there is a need to set up an effective way to facilitate provision of assistance to ensure timely and adequate response to a situation involving the implementation of the provisions of Article VII. It is also essential to underline the concrete benefits of accession to the Convention.
3. It is widely recognized that international assistance should be considered in case of a biological outbreak, but this assistance would not necessarily need to be channelled through the BWC, as the outbreak might not be due to a biological weapon. The provisions of Article VII refer to the specific situation in which the Security Council has decided that a State party has been exposed to a danger as a result of a violation of the Convention. However as noted in past Review Conferences, "in view of the humanitarian imperative, pending consideration of a decision by the Security Council, timely emergency assistance could be provided by States Parties, if requested."

II. Proposal

4. It is proposed that the ISU establish and administer a database open to all States Parties, for assistance under Article VII. The purpose of a database on Article VII would be solely to implement Article VII of the BWC and allowing matching specific offers and requests for assistance. It would respond to a specific need, which is fully relevant to the scope of the BWC, for developing effective measures for the provision of assistance and coordination with relevant international organizations to respond to the use of a biological or toxin weapon.



5. Setting-up a database in the framework of the BWC would not mean duplicating emergency assistance mechanisms already provided by regional or international organizations or bilateral arrangements. It would encompass both emergency assistance, containment measures and recovery assistance.

6. Furthermore, the establishment of this database would provide for a concrete incentive for universalization of the Convention, by providing an operational and concrete tool to implement one of its provisions.

III. Content of the database and modalities for its use

7. The dedicated database could be established on the BWC website and maintained by the ISU, along the same lines as the database established for assistance under Article X, but separate from it. Its purpose would be to provide for a confidential clearing-house tool for assistance requests and offers. It would be easily searchable and accessible to States Parties and could provide both for national points of contact, able to promptly examine demands in accordance with domestic procedures and/or for specific offers for assistance. These may include one or more of the following: expertise, information, protection, detection, decontamination, prophylactic and medical and other equipment that could be required to assist the States Parties in the event that a State Party is exposed to danger as a result of a violation of the Convention. The assistance offers could emanate from States parties, individually or together with other States, as well as relevant international organizations. The database could also include agreed procedures for States Parties to seek and receive assistance.

8. This proposal would not require additional resources within the ISU as it would mainly rely on the information provided by States Parties. It could therefore be easily and quickly implemented.

9. A voluntary fund could also be considered for assistance under Article VII.

IV. Future steps

10. States Parties may agree at the next Review Conference to establish a dedicated database on the BWC website and maintained by the ISU, along the same lines as the database established for assistance under Article X, but separate from it. In order to facilitate the requests, a standard application form / agreed procedures could be elaborated by agreement of States Parties. Following such agreement, States Parties could be invited, individually or together with other states or international organizations, to submit on a voluntary basis to the Implementation Support Unit any requirements, needs or offers for assistance. States Parties may use the database to match offers with requests for assistance and then make their own further arrangements. Once a match is made, the States Parties concerned will inform the ISU which will update the database accordingly. The ISU may also, upon request, facilitate the exchange of information among States Parties relating to the database and any resulting cooperation and assistance activities.

11. States Parties could discuss and review the nature of assistance, as well as key capabilities that may be of relevance for providing assistance under Article VII.
