

# **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**

3 November 2022

English only

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Geneva, 28 November to 16 December 2022

Item 12 of the provisional agenda

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

## **Proposal for inclusion in the final document of the Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention regarding the establishment of a Working Group to create the International Agency for Biological Safety (IABS)**

### **Submitted by Kazakhstan**

1. The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) of 1972 remains a unique disarmament agreement, prohibiting an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, unlike other types of WMD (nuclear, chemical), there is a need to institutionalize and enhance the effectiveness of the BWC regime.
2. The COVID-19 pandemics showed how underestimated the danger of mass infection was and, accordingly, what destructive force a biological weapon could hypothetically have. It is also widely recognized that these disease outbreaks demonstrate the lack of preparedness of the global biosecurity and health system, as well as humanitarian assistance to respond to such situations. In this context, it is important to establish a dialogue between all stakeholders in order to achieve mutual understanding and to build confidence in the practical implementation of the BWC provisions.
3. In the framework of the seventy-fifth session of the UN General Assembly, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev proposed to establish a specialized agency – the International Agency for Biological Safety (IABS), which in its activities will be guided by the BWC, aiming to prevent new pandemics and comprehensively strengthening the Convention.
4. In this regard, the co-sponsors propose, based on the Inter-sessional Work Program and instead of the meeting of experts on Institutional Strengthening of the Convention, to establish a Working Group to create the International Agency for Biological Safety (IABS), with a mandate to: (1) evaluate optimal paths to create the IABS, (2) make recommendations regarding the working arrangements of the Agency and its documentation, and (3) report its proposals to the annual Meeting of States Parties (MSP). The Ninth Review Conference would delegate authority to the MSP to review the report of the Working Group and consider actions to be taken by the States Parties, including possible legal, verification, and other measures under the framework of the Convention.
5. The mandate of the proposed Working Group would be fully inclusive in terms of both participation and focus, with a view to achieving shared perspectives on concrete measures to create the IABS. Experts and all other representatives from all States Parties would be invited to participate. The structured topics for consideration would accommodate consideration of the range of views of States Parties. To this end, the co-sponsors have proposed that the mandate of the Working Group specifically address these essential areas:
  - Mechanisms to establish IABS (legal, financial, etc.);



- Measures on implementation and promotion;
- Further measures to enhance international cooperation and assistance.

6. 2025 will mark both the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the entry into force of the Biological Weapons Convention. The co-sponsors believe that these impending anniversaries are a reminder of our solemn responsibility as States Parties to address the evolving threat of biological weapons and revitalize the Convention. We urge all States Parties to seize the opportunity of the Ninth Review Conference and, finally, endow the BWC with an effective executive specialized body – the International Agency for Biological Safety (IABS).

Note: The attachment to this working paper contains the specific proposal by Kazakhstan for inclusion in the final document of the Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention for establishing a Working Group to create the IABS.

## Attachment

### Establishment of a Working Group on the International Agency for Biological Safety (IABS) by the Ninth Review Conference

(a) The Ninth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention hereby decides to establish a Working Group on the initiative to create the International Agency for Biological Safety (hereinafter - WG). The report of the WG and its specific findings are intended to provide a basis for considering further actions to be taken by the States Parties, including possible legal, verification, or other measures on creation of a new international body in the framework of the Convention.

(b) **Participation:** WG meetings would be open to experts and other representatives of all States Parties and Signatory States. States which are neither parties nor signatories to the Convention and international organizations may apply to participate as observers. The WG would determine the appropriate participation of civil society, NGOs, academic institutions and industry in its program of work.

(c) **Chair:** [TBD] would chair the WG together with vice-chairs [TBD].

(d) **Working-Methods:** The WG would be governed by consensus, including the adoption of the report of the WG and the findings contained therein.

(e) **Report:** At the completion of its work, the WG would prepare a report with recommendations on further actions to create the IABS and its further functioning. The Chair of the WG would provide an interim procedural report to the 2023 Meeting of States Parties (MSP). The WG would issue its final report in advance of the 2024 MSP, at which meeting (and any future MSP), the Review Conference authorizes the States Parties to consider the report and to decide upon any further action to be taken by States Parties, including possible legal, verification, or other measures under the framework of the Convention.

(f) **Funding:** Given that the WG will replace the existing group on Institutional Strengthening of the Convention no additional funding is foreseen.

(g) **Schedule/Objectives of WG:** Two annual meetings each two weeks in length would be convened in Geneva over a two-year period (2023-2024). The first meeting is scheduled for 2023 [dates to be inserted].

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