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# **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**

9 December 2022

English only

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Geneva, 28 November to 16 December 2022

Item 12 of the 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 9<sup>th</sup> Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention on establishment of an Ad Hoc Working Group**

### **Submitted by Pakistan**

1. Since its adoption fifty years ago, the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and its review process are at an inflection point today. The pace of discoveries and advances in the field of biological sciences and technology continues to gain momentum.
2. The deliberations in the past review conferences have highlighted the need to adapt the BWC and make it responsive to the growing evolution in biological sciences and technologies. There is also a general sense among States Parties to revitalize the Convention in the face of opportunities and risks emanating from these advances.
3. The Intersessional Work Programme and Meeting of State Parties (MSP) arrangements have helped solidify the normative underpinnings of the Convention. However, these arrangements have yet to yield a transformational alignment with contemporary and future biological risk and opportunity landscape.
4. Some of the key factors impeding this adaptation include the mere articulation of respective positions and priorities by States Parties without much headway in reconciling and shaping a common agenda to make the BWC fit for purpose. Discussions and proposals during the intersessional period have revealed a tendency to hedge by linking progress on respective areas of priority.
5. This state of inertia calls for shaping a new approach that harnesses the general agreement to strengthen the BWC in a holistic manner where both its regulatory and promotional dimensions are pursued simultaneously. The new approach should also entail a realistic appraisal of a new organizational design, institutional set-up and financial arrangements that are necessary for the Conventions' effective implementation.
6. Accordingly, it is proposed that the Ninth Review Conference authorize replacement of the existing intersessional work programme i.e. meeting of experts with the establishment of an Ad Hoc Working Group (AWG). The mandate of the AWG will be to deliberate and identify effective measures to revitalize the Convention normatively, institutionally and financially. The Meeting of State Parties (MSP) may continue to act as a platform for discussions. The Ad Hoc Working Group may provide updates on its deliberations to the MSPs.
7. The Ad Hoc Working Group would be open to participation by all States Parties and their experts. Inputs from other stakeholders can be obtained in line with existing arrangements and practices of the BWC.



8. The Ad Hoc Working Group may synthesize its conclusions and recommendations on revitalization of the Convention in all its dimensions and present them to the 10<sup>th</sup> Review Conference for its consideration and approval.

**Note:** The attachment to this working paper contains the specific proposal on the Ad Hoc Working Group including structured themes for inclusion in the final document of the Ninth Review Conference.

## Attachment

### I. Establishment of an Ad Hoc Working Group by the Ninth BWC Review Conference

1. The Ninth BWC Review Conference hereby decides to replace the existing Meetings of Experts with establishment of an Ad Hoc Working Group (AWG) for a period of four years with the mandate to deliberate and identify effective measures for revitalization of the Convention in all its aspects. The AWG shall present its conclusions and recommendations to the 10<sup>th</sup> BWC Review Conference.
2. The report of the AWG containing conclusions and recommendations would serve the basis for further concrete steps to revitalize the BWC normatively, institutionally and financially.
3. AWG meetings would be open to experts from all States Parties. The Group may determine the modality of participation from other stakeholders as part of its programme of work. In accordance with the established practice, the AWG chairpersonship and vice-chairpersonships will be rotated among the regional groups.
4. The AWG will conduct its deliberations in accordance with the BWC Rules of Procedure and working methods. Its report and recommendations would be adopted by consensus. The funding modalities for the AWG would be decided by the Ninth BWC Review Conference and incorporated accordingly herein.
5. The Ad Hoc Working Group shall provide an update on its deliberations to the MSPs. The MSPs shall continue to perform their role and functions as before.
6. At the conclusion of its work, the AWG would prepare a report for the 10<sup>th</sup> BWC Review Conference outlining:
  - i. the synthesis of its deliberations over the salience of existing and emerging scientific and technological developments in the field of biology and their impact on the operation of the BWC;
  - ii. opportunities and risks on the regulatory and promotional pillars of the BWC; and
  - iii. present its conclusions and recommendations on revitalization of the Convention in all its aspects.
7. The AWG may convene a total of nine meetings during the next four years, with two meetings each year and each meeting of one-week duration in Geneva. The first meeting of the AWG shall be held [placeholder for 2023 dates]. Each meeting shall be devoted to the respective specific topic, as given below. The ninth meeting of the AWG shall prepare a report containing conclusions and recommendations and submit it to the first Preparatory Committee of the 10<sup>th</sup> BWC Review Conference.

### II. Topics and Meetings

#### Meetings in 2023

1. Overview of scientific and technological advancements and their impact on the operation of BWC.
2. Promotional and regulatory dimensions of BWC: opportunities and risks.

#### Meetings in 2024

3. Measures to operationalize international assistance and cooperation.

4. Organizational, institutional and financial arrangements.

### **Meetings in 2025**

5. National measures to enhance confidence and transparency while reducing potential risks.
6. Compliance and verification measures relevant to the BWC.

### **Meetings in 2026**

7. Scientific Advisory Board/Committee.
8. Measures relating to preparedness, assistance and response.

### **Meeting in 2026/27**

9. Report writing and finalization.
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