

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

12 December 2022

Original: English and Russian
English and Russian only

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**

Proposals to Improve Biological Security and Enhance Confidence-Building Measures under the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

Submitted by the Russian Federation

1. Since the Eighth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), there have been significant changes in the field of biological security. In addition to the whole spectrum of known biological threats, which still persist, the international community is faced with new emerging global challenges requiring urgent response. Those include:

- The spread of the new infection – COVID-19 (according to WHO, more than 640 million people have been infected and more than 15 million people have died during the pandemic);
- The expanding geographical spread of infectious diseases dangerous for humans – monkey pox, highly pathogenic avian influenza;
- The spread of animal infections – African swine fever;
- The increasing scale of dual-use scientific and technological advances in biotechnology and synthetic biology;
- The creation of biological laboratories to conduct research on potential biological warfare agents outside the national territory, including those that are extraterritorially funded by state military or other agencies;
- The transfer to the territories of other countries of the dual-use research in laboratories with high biosafety levels that may result in the creation of components for biological weapons;
- The deterioration of the epidemiological situation in the areas where such biological laboratories are located, collection of strains of particularly dangerous infections with their subsequent transfer (transportation) to other countries.

2. We note that:

- There is a lack of transparency in national biological defence research and development programmes, including those carried out outside the national territory;
- Currently, the Confidence-Building Measures approved by a decision of the Third Review Conference back in 1991 are the only mechanism ensuring transparency in the BTWC implementation;
- In light of newly emerging biological challenges and threats, there is an urgent need for improved reporting forms as part of the Confidence-Building Measures.



3. It is in the common interests of the world community to search for effective ways of strengthening global biological security in the framework of the BTWC, including through ensuring compliance with the Convention by all its States Parties without exception.

4. In this context, we propose the following:

(a) To resume the negotiations to develop a legally binding protocol to the BTWC which would contain lists of pathogenic micro-organisms, toxins and specialized equipment, have a comprehensive nature, take into account modern scientific and technological advances and establish an effective verification mechanism;

(b) To introduce, as part of the Confidence-Building Measures, a new form entitled "Biological defence research and development conducted outside the national territory";

(c) To modify Form G to include the information on facilities producing animal vaccines;

(d) To provide for the creation of a Scientific Advisory Committee to assess advances in areas of science and technology relevant to the Convention, ensuring broad geographical representation among its members and their equal rights. Based on the results of its work, the Committee could, among other things, develop proposals for improving the format of the Confidence-Building Measures;

(e) To create, within the framework of the BTWC, mobile biomedical units with a view to advancing international cooperation for prevention of infectious diseases pursuant to Article X, providing assistance and delivering protection against biological weapons pursuant to Article VII, and investigating cases of alleged use of biological weapons pursuant to Article VI.

5. Practical implementation of our proposals could help increase the transparency of national biological programmes and ensure full compliance with the BTWC provisions by its States Parties.
