

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

30 August 2021

English only

2020 Meeting

Geneva, 22-25 November 2021

Meeting of Experts on Review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention

Geneva, 1-2 September 2021

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Review of science and technology developments relevant to the Convention, including for the enhanced implementation of all articles of the Convention as well as the identification of potential benefits and risks of new science and technology developments relevant to the Convention, with a particular attention to positive implications

Review Process of Science and Technology Developments relevant to the BWC: Some Considerations

Submitted by the Islamic Republic of Iran

1. New scientific and technological (S&T) advancements in the field of biosciences have brought both benefits and challenges. They require monitoring by States Parties to the Convention.
2. In the course of the intersessional process since 2012, a significant part of the discussions on S&T were focused on the potential negative implications of such advances for the Convention and how to minimize the risks. States Parties, inter alia, should reaffirm their commitment that they use these sciences and technologies consistent with the peaceful object and purpose of the Convention.
3. Many actual benefits arising from advances in S&T for public health and industry have already been identified. The current process of Review of S&T needs to discuss ways and means of maximising the actual benefits of new scientific and technological advancements in the field of bio sciences, such as approaches for increasing availability and promoting access to and use of the above-mentioned technologies and know-how in developing countries in order to reduce the existing gaps between developing and developed BWC States Parties. States Parties have commitment under article X of the Convention to cooperate in contributing to the development and application of scientific discoveries for prevention of disease or for other peaceful purposes. In this regard, the developed States Parties bear a special responsibility.
4. The BWC provisions, in no way, recognize the distinction between haves and have-not in the field of bio-science and bio-technology; therefore, the "non-proliferation concern"



has no sensible meaning in relations with the cooperation among the States Parties. The dual-use nature inherited in many of advances of S&T should not be misused to impose restrictions and/or limitations on transfers of biological agents, toxins, scientific knowledge, technology, equipment and materials for peaceful purposes among the States Parties.

5. States Parties decided in 2017 to reorganize and upgrade the review process of S&T developments in a new format though convening an annual dedicated session of Meeting of Experts. This new format, compared to the previous intersessional process which took place between 2012-2015, represents an important upgrade.

6. The recently enhanced process for the review of S&T has valuable features. It has its own independent substantive agenda. It directly and independently reports the discussions of technical governmental experts to the Meeting of States Parties (MSP) in a factual manner, assisting the MSP to formulate policy recommendation for consideration by the Review Conference.

7. The current process is inclusive and open to all BWC States Parties, experts of developed and developing countries can participate without discrimination in discussions of highly technical and significant S&T issues.

8. In current format, more time has been allotted to review of S&T developments than before. Now it has two full working days available. It has attracted the attention and participation of more governmental and non-governmental technical experts than before.

9. It has enabled a more structured and systematic review of S&T than before. This enhanced format is more flexible than before to accommodate possible enhancements and adjustments if the Review Conference decides to do so.

10. Instead of trying to create a new exclusive mechanism for the review of S&T which is a setback to current S&T review process, States Parties should try to achieve the utmost advantage out of the current review process of S&T and consider ideas and way and means how this current format can be improved over time. We are open to consideration and discussion of such ideas and proposals in the context of comprehensive and balanced strengthening of the Convention in all its aspects.
