

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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Role of international cooperation and assistance under Article X, in support of strengthening the implementation of the Convention

U.S. Project to Strengthen BWC National Implementation: An Offer of Assistance

Submitted by the United States

Dating back to the First BWC Review Conference, States Parties have recognized the importance of sharing information on the measures they take nationally to implement the Convention. Such information can help other States Parties by providing examples and models of national practice and can support efforts to strengthen national implementation, including through bilateral or multilateral assistance. The United States seeks to develop a comprehensive, user-friendly, and widely accessible online database of national implementation measures for the benefit of States Parties. As part of this effort, we seek partners interested in support for the further development of their national implementation systems.

I. The Importance of BWC Implementation

1. The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention's (BWC) standing as a bulwark against the use of biological weapons depends substantially on effective national implementation by its States Parties. Article IV of the Convention requires each State Party to "take any necessary measures to prohibit and prevent the development, production, stockpiling, acquisition or retention of the agents, toxins, weapons, equipment and means of delivery specified in Article I of the Convention, within the territory of such State, under its jurisdiction or under its control anywhere." The United States Government wishes to offer a new line of effort to assist States Parties with this important responsibility. Together, we must ensure there is no safe haven for anyone considering a deliberate biological weapons attack.

II. The Challenge

2. Presently, evaluating the overall status of national implementation of the BWC by its States Parties, for example by examining national legislation and regulations, remains a significant challenge. Information about which States Parties may have challenges and in



what areas – which could help prioritize specific assistance efforts in response to requests, to promote national implementation where it is needed most – remains difficult to ascertain.

3. Some States Parties may lack the resources or capacity to develop and implement the full range of measures to fulfill their obligations under Article IV of the BWC to prohibit and prevent biological weapons. Additionally, other States Parties may have identified or experienced challenges in their national legislation, regulations, or other measures that they want to address in order to fulfill their obligations more effectively. While the far-reaching impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic should remind States Parties of the threat of infectious disease (whether naturally occurring, accidental, or deliberate in origin), the overwhelming economic and humanitarian impacts of the pandemic have likely made it even more difficult for States Parties to dedicate the resources necessary to address national implementation of the Convention.

III. A New U.S. Offer of Assistance to Strengthen the Implementation of the BWC

4. The United States Government is funding the development of a two-part BWC implementation support project that seeks to address two of the main obstacles that may impede States Parties' efforts to fulfill their obligations under Article IV of the Convention.

(a) **Comprehensive and accessible online platform:** To make available current information about BWC national implementation and to facilitate the provision of assistance to States Parties to fulfill this obligation, the United States will develop a user-friendly, comprehensive, and accessible online platform containing organized, searchable, and publicly available information about national implementation measures taken by BWC States Parties. States Parties will have the opportunity to contribute to information included in the platform. The platform will allow users to search for legislative provisions of other States Parties (for example, those with similar laboratory and biotech industry capability or with similar legal systems) to assist them in developing or revising their own legislative and regulatory frameworks. This new resource could eventually become a "Best Practices" repository for national implementation of the Convention, as it would provide States Parties equitable access to a space to share approaches to national implementation. The online platform will be a resource for all States Parties, supporting BWC national implementation through information sharing.

(b) **Pilot projects for national implementation:** The utility of the online platform will be demonstrated through a series of pilot projects with interested States Parties. The platform will be used to identify and address where assistance would be most beneficial to strengthen States Parties' national implementation measures.

IV. Seeking Expressions of Interest – We Want to Hear from You

5. The precise nature of and level of funding for pilot project activities will depend on the preferences of and circumstances in the selected States Parties; these may include the development of legislation and/or other measures to enhance the security of biological agents and toxins, identifying best practices to strengthen oversight of research, and refinement of laws and other regulations to fully implement the BWC.

6. Recognizing that national implementation of the BWC involves many elements and is a lengthy effort, we would not only aim to address the most critical national implementation gaps, but also to support the development of follow-on action plans by each partner country for next steps after the project ends. Thus, the pilot projects will not only improve the national implementation of the BWC, but will validate, refine, and promote the use of the new online implementation platform for many years to come.

7. States Parties that would like to be considered for participation in any of the national implementation pilot projects are encouraged to contact the U.S. Department of State via email at ISN-BPS-DL@state.gov, with the subject line: **Request for Assistance: BWC**

Implementation Program (name of State Party). The communication should include the contact information for the government official that would serve as the national lead for the project, and any information that may be available regarding the particular needs or priorities of the State Party, as a basis for further communication. Some of the factors to be considered during the selection process will be the demonstrated need for assistance with implementation of the BWC's obligations and the State Party's availability to start to work on this project promptly.
