

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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English and French only

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Meeting of Experts on Strengthening National Implementation

Geneva, 3 September 2021

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Various ways to promote transparency and confidence building under the Convention

An exchange Platform for voluntary transparency exercises: Terms of reference

Submitted by Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Spain

I. Background

1. Reaffirming that the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) remains the only international instrument to fully ban this entire category of armament and therefore plays a fundamental role for international peace and security.
2. Recalling the importance of confidence-building measures under the BTWC and taking note of initiatives undertaken by BTWC States parties in that regard, including through the organization of voluntary transparency exercises.
3. Recalling as well that States Parties agreed at the 2017 December meeting of State parties to make efforts, during the intersessional process, to explore various ways to promote transparency and confidence building under the Convention.
4. Recognizing the added value of voluntary transparency exercises in order to contribute to strengthening national implementation of the Convention by States parties, enhancing confidence among States Parties and improving international cooperation.
5. Underlining that since 2011¹, 15 countries have taken the initiative to host a voluntary transparency exercise; these various exercises that vary in their nature, substance and procedures brought together 35 countries from all regional groups; this positive dynamic needs to be pursued and consolidated.
6. Thus, States parties to the BTWC could agree the creation of an exchange platform for voluntary transparency exercises based of the following draft terms of reference:

¹ Reference documents: [BWC/CONF.VII/WP.28](#) "A peer review mechanism for the Biological Weapons Convention: enhancing confidence in national implementation and international cooperation", [BWC/CONF.VIII/WP.35](#) "Building confidence through voluntary transparency exercises", [BWC/MSP/2019/MX.3/WP.5](#): "An exchange platform for voluntary transparency exercises".



II. Purpose of the Exchange Platform

7. States Parties agree to create an exchange Platform related to voluntary transparency exercises conducted by States Parties to the BTWC.

The aim of this exchange Platform is to:

(a) Strengthen the implementation of the BTWC, and in particular support national implementation efforts;

(b) Discuss and exchange information and best practices on voluntary transparency exercises conducted by BTWC States parties;

(c) Create a Compendium of all voluntary transparency exercises, as well as related best practices, conducted by BTWC State parties and lessons learned from exchanges within the Platform; and

(d) Identify potential needs for assistance and cooperation for national implementation of the Convention, including reusable in the implementation of Article X of the BTWC.

8. States Parties willing to engage in a voluntary transparency exercise are encouraged to use the exchange Platform.

III. Annual meetings and Compendia submission

9. The exchange Platform gathers every year in a meeting, open to all States Parties, on the margins of the meeting of experts dedicated to Strengthening national implementation; it includes presentations on exercises already carried out.

10. Results of voluntary transparency exercises already conducted and presented within the yearly exchange Platform meeting, as well as related best practices, are compiled in the Compendium, and submitted each year to the Meeting of State Parties as a BTWC working paper.

IV. Functioning and Operation of the Exchange Platform

11. The exchange Platform yearly meeting is chaired on a voluntary basis by the chair of the meeting of experts dedicated to Strengthening national implementation ; if not, the exchange Platform yearly meeting is chaired by a voluntary State party if no participating States parties to the exchange Platform opposes it.

12. Proceedings of the yearly exchange Platform are sustained by the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) of the Convention.

13. The ISU, in consultation with the Chair, invites all States parties to the exchange Platform yearly meeting to be held on the margins of the meeting of experts dedicated to Strengthening national implementation.

14. The Implementation Support Unit is in charge of the administration of an online portal, on the website of the BTWC, where (i) report of the exchange Platform, (ii) Compendia of voluntary transparency exercises presented within the Platform, would be both available to all States Party, (iii) offers of assistance for organizing and conducting a voluntary transparency exercise will be made publicly available.
