

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

22 November 2021

English only

2020 Meeting

Geneva, 22-25 November 2021

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Consideration of the factual reports of the Meetings of Experts reflecting their deliberations, including possible outcomes

Implementation of Articles IV and X of the Biological Weapons Convention

Submitted by the Republic of Korea

1. Since the ratification of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in 1987, the Republic of Korea (ROK) has been committed to fulfilling all of its obligations under the BWC and attaches particular importance to the national implementation of Article IV and the provision of cooperation and assistance for Article X. This paper provides an update on the activities related to Articles IV and X.

Article IV: National Implementation

2. The ROK remains of the view that each State Party's robust implementation of the obligations under the Convention is vital in ensuring the treaty's effectiveness.

3. To effectively prohibit and prevent the development of any biological weapons and to control the manufacture of biological agents or toxins that can be used as biological weapons, the ROK's Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy (MOTIE) thoroughly revised the *Chemical Weapons Prohibition Act of 2006* into the *Act on the Prohibition of Chemical and Biological Weapons and the Control of the Production, Export, and Import of Specific Chemicals and Biological Agents* (CBWPA). In addition, the CBWPA requires the export of biological agents and toxins to abide by the *Public Notice of Exportation and Importation of Strategic Items* in accordance with the *Foreign Trade Act*.

4. The CBWPA was revised and expanded to provide a comprehensive set of rules and regulations on the prohibition and control of biological agents that had been previously scattered among various Acts, such as the *Infectious Disease Control and Prevention Act*, the *Act on the Prevention of Contagious Animal Diseases*, and the *Plant Protection Act*.

5. With the recent dramatic developments in biotechnology, the respective roles of government agencies, the relevant industries, and academia have become more critical for the national implementation of the BWC. The Korean government established a framework to encourage and to maintain close cooperation between government agencies and non-government organizations, focusing on reinforcing the national implementation of the BWC, including the effective and efficient application of the CBWPA.

6. In line with the advancements in biotechnology, MOTIE has been working with the Korea Biotechnology Industry Organization (KoreaBIO), a non-government organization established for promoting technology development and commercialization in the biotechnology industry, in the following three areas:



(a) Policymaking: The Korean BWC implementation committee consists of experts from the government, the relevant industries, and academia. This committee takes highly active role in providing advice and opinions on government policies on the national implementation of the BWC.

(b) Education: Workshops are held annually to strengthen the competence level of interested parties in biosafety and biosecurity and prevent the misuse of biotechnology with specific materials. In addition, there are on-site education programs that include visits to the facilities where biological agents and toxins are processed.

(c) Awareness-raising: Seminars and other events are held, and a website has been developed to raise awareness of the BWC and the CBWPA in the biotechnology industry and academic community. In addition, brochures and periodicals are published to disseminate information on the CBWPA.

7. KoreaBIO acts as an essential link between the government and non-government sectors to encourage relevant industries and academic community to implement the BWC actively. Such active participation of relevant industries and academia is one of the most effective ways to ensure faithful national implementation. Furthermore, it will promote scientific and technological developments in the relevant fields.

8. The Ministry of National Defense (MND) revised the *Biological Weapons Prohibition Directive* to facilitate the implementation of the BWC in the military, and it has been in force since May 2008. In accordance with the Directive, MND designated the Korea Arms Verification Agency (KAVA) as the implementation organization for the MND's biological safety tests and appointed experts in the field of biology as verification members to conduct yearly inspections on biological research facilities within the military.

9. The followings are monitored during the regular inspections: safety of the biological research facilities and the maintenance and management of various documents. The status of implementation of the BWC is verified on site. After reviewing any possible improvements, the MND monitors whether appropriate measures are being taken. The MND confirms and manages the implementation of the BWC within the military through such a safety inspection system and is maintaining the utmost in biosafety management.

10. To secure high-risk pathogens from being misused as a means of bioterrorism, the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) established a permission system for possessing infectious disease pathogens and created more rigorous standards for high-risk pathogen handlers, in terms of academic background, work experience, and mandatory education, by revising the Infectious Disease Control and Prevention Act in December 2019.

11. The Korean government is taking proactive measures in response to the COVID-19 based on openness, transparency, and creative innovation. In addition, we implemented active response measures using the 3T strategy of Test, Trace, and Treatment. For rapid patient isolation and management, we developed various test methods and conducted preemptive tests. The ROK also makes various efforts to secure COVID-19 vaccine supply in order to meet demand for vaccines at home and abroad.

The government is continuously improving the national health system to enhance pandemic prevention, preparedness and response based on the lessons learned from the COVID-19. The ROK also aims to increase its contribution to regional and global cooperation to overcome COVID-19 pandemic, to strengthen governance on health security and to prepare and respond to potential health security crisis in a more effective manner.

Article X: International Cooperation

12. The ROK believes that international cooperation is critical in supporting national implementation, which Article X of the BWC acknowledges.

13. To develop the government-wide joint response capabilities and seek ways to cooperate between the ROK and the U.S. against natural or deliberate biological threats, the MND and the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) have been conducting tabletop exercises since 2011.

14. The KDCA is making significant efforts to strengthen its capabilities in detecting, evaluating, reporting, and responding to public health threats to prepare for potential public health crises. For example, the KDCA and the World Health Organization's Regional Office for the Western Pacific signed a memorandum of understanding in 2016 regarding a Field Epidemiology Training Program to:

- (a) build capacity in event-based surveillance and rapid risk assessment for implementation
- (b) prepare the program's alumni to contribute to public health emergencies, such as increasing surge capacity, when public health events occur in the Western Pacific Region; and,
- (c) establish a network of fellows in the Western Pacific Region for future collaboration.

15. The ROK places great importance on preventing biological threats. Since 2005, the ROK has participated in the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction (GP) to contribute proactively to the efforts to prevent terrorists or states that sponsor terrorism from acquiring or developing weapons of mass destruction and related materials, equipment, and technology.

16. The ROK has also actively participated in the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSa). The ROK is a permanent member (2019-2023) of the GHSa Steering Group and contributes to GHSa Action Packages with immunizations. In addition, the ROK government and the Korea International Cooperation Agency have supported capacity building in infectious diseases and laboratory management through projects such as the Development and Implementation of Activities Contributing to the GHSa in Cambodia (2017-2020, USD 3 million), the GHSa Strengthening Project in Ghana (2018-2021, USD 7.5 million), and the Master's Degree Program in GHSa Capacity Building.

17. In addition, the ROK established the Global Disease Eradication Fund (GDEF) for the treatment and prevention of infectious diseases in developing countries in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and other international initiatives. One thousand KRW (approximately 1 USD) is levied on every international flight ticket departing from the ROK to fund the GDEF. Since 2017, the GDEF has been supporting various projects to strengthen capacity for responding to infectious diseases such as the WHO's Strengthening National Laboratory Systems and the Workforce for Surveillance of Emerging Threats Including Antimicrobial Resistance (2017-2022, USD 9.75 million), Building Resilient Health Care Services to Improve Emergency Preparedness (2018-2022, USD 5.84 million), and Promoting Global Health Security through Strengthened Capacities for Outbreak Prevention, Detection, and Response (2019-2023, USD 9.5 million), as well as core programs of other global health organizations, including CEPI (2020-2022, USD 9 million).

18. The ROK made an extra-budgetary contribution to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of USD 1 million to support global response to pandemic in 2020. This contribution supports IAEA's Zoonotic Diseases Integrated Action initiative to strengthen preparedness and capabilities of countries to detect, diagnose and monitors outbreaks of zoonotic diseases.

19. The ROK supports activities of the Committee on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540. The ROK shared recent developments in the ROK's export control system at the regional Wiesbaden Conference in 2017, 2018 and 2019. In 2018, the ROK hosted the 2nd United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 Industrial Outreach Conference with support from the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany as part of the Wiesbaden Conference for the Asia Pacific region. The conference facilitated information exchange between regulators and industries to find ways to implement UNSCR 1540 (2004) effectively.

20. The ROK remains committed to fulfilling its obligation under the BWC. It is ready to share its experience and practices in national implementation and international cooperation with other States Parties and the private sector to strengthen the Convention.