

**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**

14 December 2023

English only

2023 Meeting
Geneva, 11–13 December 2023

**Joint statement on behalf of the Member States of the
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely
Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's
Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines,
Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam**

Submitted by the Philippines

Mister Chair,

1. I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.
2. We continue to commend the Chair, the Vice Chairs, the Secretariat, and the Implementation Support Unit for their excellent stewardship of the Convention. We express our full support and cooperation in ensuring productive discussions towards the success of this Meeting.
3. We reiterate the importance of strengthening international and regional cooperative efforts in the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and disarmament, advancing the ultimate goal of their elimination and the prevention of their proliferation, as well as the peaceful uses of biological, chemical and nuclear technology. With this, the ASEAN Member States reaffirm their commitment to the Biological Weapons Convention, which is an important component in our vision for a rules-based, people-oriented, and people-centred ASEAN Political-Security Community.
4. As part of the efforts to contribute to the implementation and effectiveness of the Convention, ASEAN Member States, through the ASEAN Regional Forum and in partnership with other States, continue to conduct workshops focusing on bio-threat reduction, bio-risk management, disease surveillance, detection, preparedness, and response.
5. Under the ambit of the ASEAN-Defence Ministers Meeting or ADMM, the ADMM-Plus Chemical, Biological and Radiological (CBR) Conference was organized in Singapore last year to develop further understanding of the risks posed by the use of CBR agents in terrorist acts within the region. The Conference carried out sharing of information and best practices among participants, with a view to enhancing cooperation and preparedness against CBR threats, and establishing closer networks amongst the regional and international CBR experts.
6. Aside from this, the CBRN Centre of Excellence for Southeast Asia based in Manila, advances the capacity of ASEAN Member States including its support for efforts to identify CBRN risk mitigation needs, develop national CBRN Action Plans, and formulate and implement regional project proposals.



7. We, the ASEAN Member States, also continue to strengthen cooperation on our efforts to prevent the proliferation of WMDs, including biological weapons, in particular through capacity-building activities to improve compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1540.

8. We also work with relevant entities in improving our capacities to fulfill our obligations to the Convention. In October this year, officials in Southeast Asia who are involved in the preparation of the reports on BWC Confidence Building Measures participated in a Regional Workshop held in Bangkok on Promoting BWC Confidence Building Measures in Southeast Asia. Organized by UNODA and was sponsored by the European Union and the United Kingdom, the workshop served to deepen the understanding of the BWC, provide an avenue for cross-sharing of best practices in CBM preparation, and inform states about available capacity-building opportunities to strengthen biosafety and biosecurity.

9. The ASEAN Member States recognize the importance of Confidence Building Measures and its reporting, which are essential to preventing ambiguities and building trust and transparency among States Parties. The CBMs serve as a useful tool to complement the eventual establishment of a verification mechanism to strengthen the implementation of the Convention. They are also integral to the assessment of national implementation, the needs, capacities, and challenges of the States Parties towards further cooperation and assistance, and in ensuring both the maintenance of international peace and security as well as the national security of each State Party. We promote the timely and consistent submission of CBM reports of the States Parties.

10. Nevertheless, we view that the CBMs and their reporting do not serve as a substitute to an effective verification measure and system and full-scale tool to assess compliance of States Parties to the Convention.

11. Again, we welcome the establishment of the Working Group on Strengthening the BWC, recognizing the necessity of multilateral negotiations and noting the lack of a verification measure within the Convention, the latter of which poses a challenge to its effectiveness, something that is highly needed in these challenging and critical times.

12. Our cooperation and work with relevant organizations and with other States Parties in the area of capacity building, risk mitigation, and CBMs feed into the implementation of our commitments to international cooperation and assistance commitments to the Convention. In the Second Meeting of the Working Group to Strengthen the BWC, ASEAN Member States submitted a Working Paper wherein we stressed the need to enhance assistance, capacity-building, and provision of technology as well as unearmarked funding to developing countries, upon their request.

13. In closing, we, the ASEAN Member States, reiterate our full support to the universality of the Biological Weapons Convention as a significant milestone in the area of disarmament. We encourage all states to join and accede to the BWC, and for the States Parties, to reaffirm their commitment and fulfill their obligations to the Convention.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.
