

Working Group on the Strengthening of 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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Agenda item 6

Identifying, examining and developing specific and effective measures, including possible legally-binding measures, and making recommendations to strengthen and institutionalize the Convention in all its aspects within the mandate of the Working Group

Proposal for Establishing a Mechanism for Strengthening International Cooperation and Assistance

Submitted by Australia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Japan, Latvia, Romania, United Kingdom, and United States

1. As noted in the Final Document, the Ninth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (“BWC” or “the Convention”) “decides to develop with a view to establishing a mechanism open to all States Parties to facilitate and support the full implementation of international cooperation and assistance under Article X.” The Review Conference tasked the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Convention with making “appropriate recommendations” (BWC/CONF.IX/9, Part II, Section D, Paragraph 18). The co-sponsors are committed to reaching consensus on the timely establishment of such a mechanism.¹

2. International cooperation and assistance (ICA) is a key aspect of the Convention. The broad nature of Article X is illustrated by the fact that Review Conferences have repeatedly urged “the use of the existing institutional means within the United Nations system and other international organisations, in accordance with their respective mandates, to promote the objectives of this Article” (BWC/CONF.VIII/4, II (68)), and affirmed that these existing institutional ways and means should be further developed. Many States Parties have been providing cooperation and assistance to other States Parties for many years. A mechanism developed by BWC States Parties should therefore complement and reinforce, rather than duplicate, these broader efforts. In the absence of an international organisation directly supporting implementation of the Convention (such as the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons or the International Atomic Energy Agency), we recommend, as a step toward the enhanced implementation of the Convention, the establishment of an ICA mechanism utilizing a programmatic approach funded through a voluntary trust fund governed by an ICA Fund Committee. Specifically:

¹ The co-sponsors are similarly committed to the timely establishment of a mechanism to review and assess scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention as tasked by the Review Conference (BWC/CONF.IX/9, Part II, Section E, Paragraph 19).



- The objective of the mechanism should be to strengthen implementation by States Parties on all aspects of the Convention through international cooperation and assistance, with a particular focus on Article X;
- Such cooperation and assistance should support the implementation of all aspects of the Convention;
- Cooperation and assistance programs and projects pursuant to the mechanism should seek to complement other international efforts, avoiding duplication with ongoing efforts and projects by international organisations as well as those of individual States Parties in a bilateral or multilateral context;
- The mechanism will be open to participation from all States Parties;
- A voluntary trust fund under the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs will be established to receive voluntary contributions and grants from States Parties and potentially from other sources, and to disburse such funds for approved programs and projects;
- The voluntary trust fund will be governed by an ICA Fund Committee (hereinafter “the Committee”) with limited membership, selected by regional groups;
- The Committee will review and take decisions on ICA proposals submitted by States Parties and monitor approved projects;
- Donor States Parties, recipient States Parties, and potentially other sources, upon approval of a project by the Committee, will coordinate on the implementation of the approved project and inform the Committee;
- The Committee will be governed by and take all decisions by consensus;
- The Committee will be composed of 15 States Parties with three States Parties designated by each of the five UN Regional Groups (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western European and Other States) and the designees will be appointed to renewable two-year terms;
- The Committee will be chaired for a two-year term by a Committee member beginning with a member from the Africa Group and rotating alphabetically through the other regions;
- Any State Party may submit a request for ICA directly to the Committee for consideration. States Parties may also submit a request jointly, including for regional activities;
- To facilitate the work of the mechanism, donor States Parties will be invited to present funding proposals and discuss ICA requests submitted to the Committee by a State Party or group of States Parties;
- The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs will disburse funds for specific programs and projects from the voluntary trust fund once approved by the Committee and consistent with any requirements of relevant donor States Parties;
- If the Committee does not approve a program or project for which a donor State Party has provided funds, or if there are remaining unspent funds following the approval or completion of relevant projects, the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs will return the relevant share of funds attributable to the donor State Party upon its request.
- The Committee will meet biannually to receive an update by the ISU and donor States Parties, review current efforts, and consider new ICA proposals;
- The Chair of the Committee will update the annual Meeting of States Parties (MSP) providing information on ICA proposals being implemented or under review. The MSP will provide an opportunity for States Parties to express their views to the

Committee on the operation of the ICA mechanism and raise any broader issues regarding the implementation of Article X;

- To assist the work of the Committee, two dedicated full-time staff members will be added to the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) financed through assessed budget contributions;
- In addition to its voluntary fund responsibilities, the Committee will coordinate with the ISU regarding existing ICA activities – the Assistance and Cooperation Database and the BWC Sponsorship program;
- The establishment of an ICA mechanism is without prejudice to any other cooperation and assistance arrangements undertaken by any State Party bilaterally, multilaterally, or through an international entity in furtherance of its Article X obligations.

3. The co-sponsors are committed to reaching consensus on the timely establishment of an ICA mechanism (as tasked by the Ninth Review Conference) and stand ready to engage all interested States Parties.
