
**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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**Meeting of Experts on Cooperation and Assistance,
with a Particular Focus on Strengthening Cooperation
and Assistance under Article X**

Geneva, 30-31 August 2021

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

**Development of guidelines and procedures for mobilizing resources, including
financial resources on a voluntary basis to address gaps and needs**

**Pandemia as catalyst to enhance cooperation and
assistance? Germany's continued implementation
of Article X under the special circumstances of
COVID-19**

Submitted by Germany

I. Summary

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the surface the vulnerability the international community faces vis-à-vis biological risks. It has given political salience to the far-reaching impacts of such risks on, inter alia, public health, economic stability and, not least, on international security.
2. Within the firmly multilateral German (and EU) response to the COVID-19 pandemic, programmes and measures under Article X of the BTWC have proven instrumental to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and to minimise the negative impacts from this particular type of risk as well as from future biological risks. Within the context of the BTWC, the pandemic opens up a window of opportunity to strengthen international preventive security networks that are conducive both to the goals of the BTWC and to strengthening international resilience against future pandemics.
3. The following paper first (1) outlines some of the measures undertaken by Germany to confront the global pandemic, then (2) focuses on the role of the programmes related to the BTWC and Article X in particular. Lastly (3), it draws lessons from these experiences and encourages an exchange of views and mutual learning.



II. Germany's multilateral approach to confront and mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic

4. Confronting a global pandemic of unprecedented scale requires multilateral action. Against this background, Germany's (and the European Union's) response to the COVID-19 pandemic has focused on encouraging and pursuing multilateral approaches for (a) immediate emergency supplies, (b) to confront and contain the pandemic through the development and supply of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics and (c) on building international capacities for stronger resilience against future pandemics and biological threats. In light of its relevance to the BTWC and Article X measures, the following paragraphs concentrate on (b) and (c).

5. The Federal Government has mobilized over 11 billion EUR in 2020/2021 to support the international response to Covid-19. As a co-founder and its second largest donor, Germany is **leading multilateral efforts** to accelerate the development and production of vaccines and to globally provide equitable access to vaccines through ACT-A and its vaccine pillar COVAX. Germany's direct contribution to ACT-A amounts to 2.2 billion EUR, with 1.62 billion EUR being allocated to COVAX. Moreover, Germany takes part in the EU's "Team Europe" approach, which, in total, donates 4.08 billion EUR to ACT-A. The majority of Germany's contributions are provided to the Advanced Market Commitment branch of COVAX, focusing on low and middle-income countries. In addition, Germany has begun to donate further vaccines from its national allocations to countries in acute need, the vast majority thereof via COVAX.

6. In light of the pandemic, Germany has increased its already **strong support for the WHO** as leading and coordinating authority in Global Health to confront current and future pandemics. Together with the EU and further partners, it has led the discussion leading to the recently adopted resolution to strengthen the WHO's preparedness for and response to health emergencies. Germany has substantially increased its contributions to the WHO to enable it to better confront the current pandemic, becoming its largest donor in 2020. Germany fully supports WHO's efforts to trace the origins of SARS-CoV-2 and advocates to strengthen its mandate in the long-term to study the emergence of future emerging pathogens with pandemic potential. With a view to future pandemics, Germany will, for example, host and support the establishment of the WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence in Berlin. Together with France, the Federal Government has initiated the establishment of the One Health High Level Expert Panel involving WHO, FAO, OIE and UNEP, which aims at better implementing the One Health approach at the international level, with a special focus on emerging zoonosis.

7. Within its multilateral approach, Germany has also **mobilized national and European research** capacities and funds for the **development and production of vaccines**, which are delivered globally. The first and one of the most widely-distributed vaccines has been developed in close international cooperation between the German and the US firms BioNTech and Pfizer.

8. Despite the intensive export of vaccines, supply is still far from meeting global demand. In addition to its own production capabilities, Germany therefore supports the build-up of vaccine **production facilities** outside the EU. Germany is currently supporting projects in Senegal (initial funding of 20 mio. EUR) and South Africa. This approach seeks to meet local demand better, more quickly and in a more sustainable way – also with a view to future pandemics and further diseases.

9. In the same vein, also the projects related to Article X of the BTWC are designed to increase local and distributed capacities in a sustainable manner. The following paragraphs illustrate some of the experiences within this realm.

III. Building capacities and resilient networks for increased biosecurity and biosafety

10. **Article X** of the BTWC commits states parties to “facilitate, and have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the use of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins for peaceful purposes”, contributing “individually or together with other States or international organisations to the further development and application of scientific discoveries in the field of bacteriology (biology) for the prevention of disease, or for other peaceful purposes”.

11. Bilateral, multilateral and international cooperation and assistance under Article X involves support of and exchange in the life sciences and technology, measures to developing human resources and promoting scientific progress, as well as building capacity in order to mitigate global biological threats, be it naturally occurring outbreaks or deliberate biological weapons attacks.

12. With an aim to foster **cooperation and assistance** in the spirit of Article X, Germany assists partner countries and the UNSGM with the twofold aim: minimising risks associated with biological substances and highly dangerous pathogens and increasing resilience against such incidents if they occur. These objectives are pursued through the German Biosecurity Programme (2013-2022: EUR 60 million); the Enable and Enhance Initiative (2016-2021: EUR 13 million) and through UNSGM assistance (2018-2021: EUR 3.3 millions). The projects enable international cooperation in accordance with the BTWC. In the current pandemic, these networks and partnerships have proven robust.

IV. German biosecurity projects as a contribution to implementing Article X

13. The **German Biosecurity Programme** was founded in 2013. Since then, it has been active in 25 countries. In its third phase from 2020-2022, the programme includes projects with nine partner countries in Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia¹ as well as two supraregional projects. At the programme’s core are long-term partnerships focused on training measures, with an aim to reach sustainable outcomes. The German Biosecurity Programme is part of Germany’s preventive security policy, pursuing activities in the areas of awareness-raising, networking, capacity-development, biosafety and biosecurity, detection and diagnostics, and disease surveillance.

14. Further **biosecurity projects** with seven African partner countries² are pursued in the framework of the **Federal Government’s Enable and Enhance Initiative**, launched in 2016. At the projects’ core are training measures in order to strengthen partner countries’ capacities to identify and respond to biological threats, accompanied by the establishment of regional networks on biosecurity, task forces and rapid response teams and the provision of mobile laboratories.

¹ Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, Ukraine, Cameroon, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Mauretania, Sierra Leone.

² Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Tunisia.

V. Addressing the pandemic: structures, skills and activities that have proven useful

15. Measures in order to increase biosecurity, prevent and respond to biological risks often contribute to both health and security. Hence, capacities and structures built with the support of our projects proved valuable during the pandemic.

- National action plans for biological emergencies and subsequent simulations, risk and crisis communication strategies, connected training measures and emergency operation centers, that were supported by the projects contributed to better **preparedness and response capacities** of our partners and were applied throughout the pandemic.
- Extensive trainings on **diagnostic capabilities**, including modern diagnostic methods, payed off when used for SARS-CoV-2-diagnostics. In Tunisia as well as in the G5-Sahel states, mobile labs provided by Germany could be used for diagnostics in rural areas.
- Support in the implementation of international **biosafety and biosecurity** (B&B) standards as well as vast resources on B&B related issues provided through the projects contributed to securing laboratory personnel when handling and processing SARS-CoV-2 samples.
- An existing **online platform (GO4BSB)** for learning and exchange was **extended by a special section on COVID-19**, including with videos, self-learning and e-learning tools as well as an information hub for decision-makers.
- Through the **support of intra action reviews** in some partner countries, a preliminary analysis of the COVID-19 response including different stakeholders can inform future action.
- With the support for **establishing SARS-CoV-2-diagnostics**, and **trainings on diagnostics, biosafety and biosecurity**, planned activities were adjusted to COVID-19.
- Established contacts and networks of trust with laboratories and health ministries in our partner countries were used to lend pandemic related support where needed. This included the **provision of diagnostic material, laboratory consumables, PPE and further equipment** as well as **needs-based exchanges** on emerging questions and best practices.

16. Due to the commitment of the project partners, many planned activities could be converted to digital and hybrid formats despite the pandemic. This included online workshops, virtual conferences and fellowship programmes as well as videotaped or individually performed practical trainings that were evaluated virtually.

VI. Cooperation on biosecurity and the pandemic - lessons learned

17. Pursuing our projects during the pandemic has led to several lessons learned that can inform both international cooperation and assistance just as the pursuit of global biological security.

- The pandemic has emphasized the **need for preventive action**: During an ongoing pandemic, there is no time to build capacities from scratch – investing in capacities before the emergency occurs cannot be substituted.

- During the pandemic, the **value of long-term cooperation** has been emphasized: The trust that has grown between project partners allowed for open exchanges on best practices and challenges which were useful for the immediate situation, but also helped to identify gaps and areas where further work is needed.
 - We also acknowledge the role that individuals have played during the pandemic: Even under difficult circumstances, an immense personal commitment to find solutions in order to overcome travel restrictions, requirements to keep distance and technical obstacles in order to enable trainings or workshops made it possible to continue project work. This underlines the **benefits of a human-centered approach** to assistance and cooperation.
18. The pandemic has demonstrated the consequences of the spread of dangerous pathogens. As such, it can work as a window of opportunity for the international community:
- Capacities built in the framework of Article X cooperation were useful to confront the pandemic. Conversely, capacities to address future pandemics can also contribute to pursue the goals of Article X and the BTWC.
 - **Investment in preparedness and prevention** measures has proven its value also beyond the sphere of biosafety & biosecurity. As such, **the pandemic can build a momentum to make the international community more resilient against future threats.**
 - Furthermore, it increased the understanding that international cooperation is needed in order to mitigate biological risks. Only work across borders and sectors will be successful in preventing future biological threats. Germany is committed to continue and to further support international and multilateral cooperation in this field.
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