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# 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

27 August 2021

English only

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## 2020 Meeting

Geneva, 22-25 November 2021

### 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 6 of the provisional agenda

**Identification of challenges and obstacles to developing international cooperation, assistance and exchange in the biological sciences and technology, including equipment and material, for peaceful purposes to their full potential, and possible ways and means of overcoming these**

## Challenges and obstacles to international cooperation, assistance and exchange in the biological sciences and technology under Article X

### Submitted by the Islamic Republic of Iran

1. States Parties to the BWC, under Article X, have a legal obligation to facilitate the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the use of biological agents and toxins for peaceful purposes. They also have commitment to cooperate in contributing to the development and application of scientific discoveries for prevention of disease or for other peaceful purposes.
2. Protection and promotion of peaceful biological activities constitute one of the objectives and purposes of the BWC. To realize this objective of the Convention, full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article X is essential.
3. International cooperation, assistance and exchange in biological sciences and technology for peaceful purposes are important for the economic and technological development of all BWC States Parties. They contribute to building capacity for disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis and containment and also to fulfilling national plans in the areas of preparedness, response, and crisis management and mitigation. However, the state of International cooperation and assistance is not satisfactory. The Covide-19 pandemic clearly showed the weakness in implementation of Article X and underlined the need to focus on strengthening international cooperation and assistance to ensure all States Parties, particularly developing States, have access to equipment, materials and scientific and technological information relevant to the Convention.



4. The lack of an institutional mechanism in the context of the BWC is the main challenge to developing full, effective and non-discriminatory international cooperation, assistance and exchange in the biological sciences and technology for peaceful purposes under Article X of the Convention. States Parties should agree on developing institutional mechanism with a view to ensuring international cooperation among all States Parties. Such a mechanism should be established through negotiation in an open-ended working group. Pending the establishment of such a mechanism, States Parties should develop an action plan for implementation of Article X, as proposed by the group of NAM and Other States.

5. Existence of restrictions, limitations, inconsistent with the Convention, as well as unilateral coercive measures including economic, trade and financial sanctions has created serious obstacles to developing international cooperation, assistance and exchange in the biological sciences and technology for peaceful purposes. Some BWC States Parties apply denial and/or restrictive, discriminatory policies and unilateral coercive measures in their approach to the implementation of Article X. Such policies and measures are in breach of the undertaking under Article X to implement the Convention in a manner not to hamper the economic and technological development of other States Parties. There exists so far no mechanism, guideline or procedure in the context of BWC to address the concern of States Parties that are affected by restrictions or denial policies and other unilateral coercive measures.

6. States Parties should undertake to develop a multilaterally negotiated procedure within the BWC to settle disputes if a State Party is restricted and/or denied as result of policies or unilateral coercive measures inconsistent with the Article X of the Convention by another State Party, to access drugs, medicines, vaccines, diagnostics and related equipment and materials for peaceful purposes. Such a procedure should include establishment of a standing body, as proposed by the group of NAM and Other States.

7. States Parties should undertake not to impose, under any circumstances, restrictions, limitations and unilateral coercive measures on trade in such areas as drugs, medicines, vaccines, diagnostics, biological agents, equipment and materials for peaceful purposes in particular for treatment of patients. States Parties should condemn the existing unilateral coercive measures, which impede the implementation of Article X, and urge the immediate lifting of all such measures to ensure full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article X.

## **Examples of the impact of the U.S. Unlawful Unilateral Coercive Measures on Iran's Health System**

8. Iran has been under comprehensive unilateral economic sanctions in recent years. These unlawful unilateral coercive measures imposed by the government of the United States of America against the Islamic Republic of Iran have impeded or disrupted access to and procurement of medicine and medical supplies, protective kits, development, purchase and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines and reagents and raw materials for their production and prevented the use of online databases of life sciences and public biomedical literature, thus creating serious challenges for the management and mitigation of COVID-19 pandemic in Iran. With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the U.S. government ruthlessly and mercilessly intensified its unilateral coercive measures against Iranian people.

9. The biggest victims of the ruthless application of unlawful unilateral coercive measures by the U.S. are ordinary people and medically vulnerable groups in Iran. These illegitimate and inhumane measures undermine the ability of Iran's government to develop and maintain medical infrastructure, and usually lead to the shortage of medical equipment and medicine, rising prices, corruption and creation of black markets, resulting in impeding

or complicating the ability of ordinary people to get access to free medical aid. Some of the negative effects of these unilateral sanctions such as disability and death cannot be reversed or compensated. These are only a few general examples of an enormous number of negative effects of the U.S. unilateral coercive measures on the health system of Iran and the right of Iranian people to health.

10. The BWC States Parties should urge the United States to immediately lift all its unilateral coercive measures against Iran and other targeted BWC States Parties. Such measures constitute violation of Article X of the Convention and right to health, and the U.S. should be called upon to comply with its obligations under the Convention and international law.

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