

**Eighth Review Conference 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**

25 April 2016

English only

Preparatory Committee
Geneva, 26-27 April and 8-12 August 2016
Item 5 of the provisional agenda
General exchange of views

**Elements on science and technology for the 2016 Review
Conference – the importance of an active review process**


Submitted by Finland, Norway and Sweden

1. The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) is an important instrument for multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation. The BWC has played an important role in preventing the use of biological weapons. However, in light of new technological advances, rapid exchange of information and increasing activity from non-state actors, we need to make sure that the BWC and its practical implementation will continue to live up to our expectations in the future.
2. The Nordic countries consider it important to establish structures that might contribute to a better functioning of the Convention, and to strengthen the ability to take collective action in between the Review Conferences. This would be of specific importance in the area of science and technology (S&T) due to the rapid advancement within life sciences and biotechnology, which can have both positive and negative impact on the BWC.
3. We highly value the contribution of experts and would encourage a more focused use of their expertise. These specialists have cutting edge knowledge of technological developments and their expertise could contribute even more to the work of the States Parties meetings and effective decision making. Dedicated meetings of scientific experts aiming at continuously evaluating the developments in life sciences and biotechnology and addressing specific topics in order to develop concrete recommendations to the States parties would be a step in the right direction.

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4. In the Meeting of States Parties in 2015, a number of States Parties – including three Nordic countries – suggested that a more structured arrangement for reviewing S&T development, relevant to the BWC, should be created.¹

5. Article XII of the BWC addresses the importance of taking into account new scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention. This can be achieved by engaging scientists in an elaborate, extended and continuous analytical work that directly benefits the operation of the Convention, serving the object and purpose of the Article XII. The annual Meeting of Experts as part of the intersessional programme is useful. Nevertheless its contribution to the BWC could be enhanced further if annual topics, reflecting the priorities decided by the annual Meeting of the States Parties, would guide its work. This would require States Parties to nominate national experts possessing know-how on specific topics to serve as members of a more structured scientific open-ended group, administered by the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) who could also have a role as a rapporteur. Others proposals made in this regard also provide valuable contribution for further elaboration of this issue.² It would be important to invite variety of specialists from academia, civil society and industry, serving in their personal capacity, when required. Experts should represent cross-disciplinary interests as the nature of the BWC requires a multitude of different elements to be taken into account in the scientific work.

6. As science and scientific work focuses on a diversity of topics in various parts of the world, mechanisms to enable participation of scientists from different regions in this important work should be explored. The work of scientists is technical, not political. Nevertheless, the experts should represent the diversity of States Parties as this would be essential to gain a full understanding of specific topics as they are understood in different parts of the world.

7. The spread of infectious diseases is a global threat in developing as well as developed countries. The existence of outbreaks of diseases that endanger lives place great strains on national health care systems and even hamper sustainable economic growth. Moreover, many of the emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases as well as classic endemic diseases represent potential biological threats. Therefore, an increased focus on research and development efforts and international collaboration is needed.

8. The BWC Review Conference should encourage and support enhanced international cooperation in life sciences, supporting national health systems and addressing global health threats. In particular, the Review Conference should recall the obligations set out in the international health regulations (IHR) and the on-going crisis reform process in the

¹ Addressing modern threats in the biological weapons convention; follow-up and recommendation. BWC/MSP/2015/WP.6/Rev.1. Geneva, 14-18 December 2015

European Union Council decision (CFSP) 2015/2096 of 16 December 2015

Reviewing developments in science and technology: Examples of dedicated processes.

BWC/MSP/2015/WP10. Reviewing developments in science and technology; parameters and considerations for a dedicated process. BWC/MSP/2015/MX/WP.11. Geneva 14-18 December 2015.

² Proposal for the annual review of advances in science and technology relevant to the Biological Weapons Convention. Submitted by Australia, Japan and New Zealand. BWC/CONF.VII/WP.13. Geneva, 15-22 December 2011

Strengthening the ability to take action: A realistic agenda for the Eight Review Conference.

Submitted by the United States of America. BWC/MSP/WP.3. Geneva, 14-18 December 2015

Illustrative model intersessional work programme: a proposal for the task group structure and agenda items. Submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

BWC/CONF.VII/WP.2. Geneva, 5-22 December 2011

Strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention. Proposal for the establishment of a scientific advisory committee. Working paper by the Russian Federation. Draft 18th of March, 2016.

WHO. The ISU of the BWC is not an operational agency in the field of international co-operation and assistance, but the Unit could contribute, within its capacities, towards the full implementation of Article X of the Convention in close partnership with the mandated agencies. In addition, the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), the G7 Global Partnership and various bilateral and multilateral programs also represent possible channels for the implementation of Article X.
