

Remarks by H.E. Amb. LI Song at the General Debate  
of the Ninth Review Conference of the  
Biological Weapons Convention  
(Geneva, 28 November 2022)

Mr. President,

The Chinese delegation congratulates you on your assumption of the Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). We assure you and other delegations of our full cooperation to make this conference a full success. The Chinese delegation would also like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation to the chairpersons of the Meetings of the States Parties (MSPs), Meetings of Experts (MXs) and the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention for their relentless efforts in this review process. At the same time, China welcomes Namibia's accession to the Convention.

Mr. President,

At present, profound changes unseen in a century are accelerating across the world. Changes to the world in this era are occurring in an unprecedented way. The historical trends of peace, development, cooperation, and mutual benefit are unstoppable. Meanwhile, the deficit in peace, development, security and

governance is getting worse. The world is again at the crossroads of history, and the Biological Weapons Convention is also facing new opportunities and challenges. The global geopolitical tensions, the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic, the rapid development of biotechnology, and the convergence of traditional biosecurity issues and new biological risks bring forth new features and trends of the biosecurity situation worldwide. Global biosecurity governance is now facing new challenges and welcoming important opportunities.

Biosecurity knows no borders. As President Xi Jinping of China proposed in the Global Security Initiative, we should stay committed to maintaining security in both traditional and non-traditional domains, and work together on global challenges including biosecurity. States Parties are a community of intertwined interests and a shared future. In light of the new international situation and new security needs, it is the shared aspiration of all States Parties to make the Convention more dynamic and play a greater role in safeguarding world peace and promoting common development. The Chinese delegation is ready to work with all parties to take the advantage of this Review Conference to carry out extensive and in-depth exchanges, work hard to help implement the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative, and seek positive achievements of the Review Conference. To this end, we propose the following:

**First, we should reaffirm the role of the Convention as an important pillar in global biosecurity governance and build new consensus on consolidating and strengthening the mechanism of the Convention.** For half a century, the Convention has been playing an irreplaceable role in thwarting biological threats, facilitating peaceful uses of biotechnology and promoting international cooperation. However, there is no implementing body of the Convention. “Ensure compliance through verification” is not only an international consensus, but also the integral and inherent intent of fulfilling the purposes and objectives of the Convention and improving and strengthening its mechanisms. In recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic and the disputes among States Parties on compliance have further highlighted the urgency of strengthening the BWC mechanism, in particular the need for resumption of a multilateral negotiation towards a non-discriminatory, legally binding protocol including effective verification measures, which will contribute to the comprehensive and balanced strengthening of the Convention. As always, China firmly supports all the efforts.

Twenty-one years ago, the BWC protocol negotiations collapse following the rejection of a superpower. China welcomes the positive willingness expressed by relevant States Parties to break the deadlock. We hope that all States Parties will reach a new consensus during the Review Conference, take into account the new development in science and technology and biosecurity as

related to the Convention, make an in-depth assessment of the feasibility of resuming relevant negotiations on the basis of existing efforts, and take prompt actions to carry out substantive work on specific issues related to the establishment of a verification mechanism.

This year, States Parties have held a formal consultative meeting at the request of the Russian Federation. The UN Security Council also holds open debates to consider compliance issues of the State Party concerned. China supports States Parties in making full use of the mechanisms in Article V and VI to conduct objective, fair and effective assessments on compliance issues. China supports States Parties in holding further discussions and taking joint actions to ensure universal compliance.

Pending the establishment of a verification mechanism, voluntary transparency measures are of positive significance in enhancing trust, reducing doubts and addressing compliance concerns. In order to properly address the concerns of the international community over the global biosecurity "cooperation projects" sponsored by the military of certain State Party, China supports the addition of "military biomedical activities conducted by a reporting State on the territory of other States" in the Confidence-building Measures (CBM) form.

**Second, we should adhere to the principle of extensive consultation and joint efforts, and conduct detailed study on**

**the issue of strengthening the BWC mechanism through an open, inclusive, pragmatic and effective inter-sessional process.** The year of 2022 marks the 50th anniversary of opening for signature of the Convention. Since the conclusion and entry into force of the Convention, its universality has been increased and its implementation mechanism has gradually been improved. During the current review cycle, States Parties have made full use of the mechanisms of the annual MSPs and MXs to have serious and effective discussions on various issues concerning strengthening the BWC mechanism. During this Conference, on the basis of a serious and comprehensive review of the implementation of the Convention, States Parties need to have a candid and in-depth exchange of views on how to strengthen the BWC mechanism, what areas to focus on, and the intersessional program, so as to launch a new round of the review process.

At present, some States Parties have put forward specific ideas and proposals. It is clear that strengthening the BWC mechanism is the ultimate goal of the proposal made by all parties and where the most extensive consensus lies. On many specific aspects such as verification, compliance, international cooperation, and science and technology review process, States Parties do have some differences to tackle. China holds that in the intersessional process after the Ninth Review Conference the principle of extensive consultation and joint efforts should be adhered to, genuine multilateralism practiced, and the greatest

extent universality, openness and inclusiveness ensured. The views and propositions put forward by States Parties should be fully respected and seriously deliberated as long as they are conducive to a stronger BWC mechanism. In the process of brainstorming, States Parties will be able to build consensus and lay out the blueprint for the future.

China attaches great importance to strengthening top-level design, and supports Kazakhstan's proposal to establish an International Agency for Biological Safety, which would facilitate a more inclusive embracement of proposals to strengthen provisions of the Convention. China supports further enhancement of collaboration between the Convention and other related international organizations, inter alia, the United Nations and the World Health Organization (WHO), to integrate resources and coordinate coherent actions consistent with their respective mandates so as to better promote global biosecurity governance. China supports proposals to shore up the staffing, funding and other resources for the Implementation Support Unit, which will in turn provide necessary support for strengthening the BWC mechanism.

To reinforce the BWC mechanism is the cause shared by States Parties and for that sake extensive consultation is needed. As long as we follow the spirit of mutual respect and seeking common ground while shelving differences, we will be able to

work out an all-round and well-balanced approach and plan accepted and supported by all States Parties. China is ready to participate in those efforts in a positive and constructive manner.

**Third, we should coordinate security and development, and fully and effectively safeguard the peaceful uses and international cooperation of biotechnology.** Progress in biotechnology has always been an important driving force for economic and social development. At the same time, the misuse and abuse of biotechnology also bring about new risks and challenges. To reduce biological risks and promote bioscience for the benefit of mankind, global scientists have worked hard for several years to reach the Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Scientists. This is the culmination of the dialogue on "promoting responsible research" under the framework of Convention. Thanks to the joint efforts of various parties in recent years, the time is ripe to further promote the Tianjin Guidelines within the Convention. China hopes that the Review Conference will endorse the Tianjin Guidelines in an appropriate manner and encourage all stakeholders to adopt them voluntarily, so as to better prevent the misuse of biotechnology and promote the healthy development of biotechnology. At the same time, we encourage all parties to strengthen the surveillance and self-regulation of biological laboratories, and we are ready to carry out exchanges with all parties on laboratory surveillance rules, technical standards and best practices, so as to jointly

strengthen global capacity building for laboratory biosecurity. China supports the establishment of a necessary scientific advisory body within the Convention.

Promoting the peaceful uses of biotechnology is an inalienable right of developing countries, and strengthening international cooperation and assistance should be the top priority of the development philosophy embedded in the Convention. China maintains that nonproliferation and peaceful uses must be handled fairly and in a balanced manner. In the name of nonproliferation, some countries willfully draw ideological lines, abuse the multilateral export control regimes and disrupt normal international cooperation among developing countries. Such practices hinder the progress of the times and must be abandoned.

China calls on the Review Conference to give priority to the implementation of Article X and hold a full discussion about the proposal of the Non-Aligned Movement countries to establish an Article X Compliance Mechanism and an International Cooperation Committee. China also encourages States Parties to actively implement the UN General Assembly Resolution Promoting International Cooperation on Peaceful Uses in the Context of International Security, and jointly explore the establishment of a fair and inclusive nonproliferation export control and international cooperation regime under the BWC framework, so as to achieve a more comprehensive and balanced



implementation of the Convention.

Mr. President,

China has always fully and strictly fulfilled its obligations in the Convention, paid its contributions in full and on time, submitted its CBM materials on time, participated fully in the review process, and actively contributed China's wisdom and proposals. China attaches great importance to the development of a national biosecurity governance system, and has implemented the Biosecurity Law of the People's Republic of China since 2021. We are ready to work with States Parties to continuously strengthen multilateral and bilateral exchanges and cooperation in biosecurity regulation, risk assessment, emergency response, information sharing and capacity building, and make new efforts for the full implementation of the Convention.

China is not only an advocate for but also a participant in international biosecurity cooperation. China has constantly made improvement on the security management of biological laboratories, carried on the good tradition of "South-South cooperation", and held several international training courses and seminars on biosecurity laboratory management and technology to help build the biosecurity talent pool of developing countries. Facing the pandemic, China has provided the largest and longest emergency humanitarian assistance since the founding of the People's Republic of China. China has provided hundreds of

billions of anti-pandemic materials to more than 150 countries and 15 international organizations, and over 2.2 billion doses of vaccines to more than 120 countries and international organizations. China was the first to support intellectual property right exemption for vaccines and the first to transfer technology to developing countries. China supports the WHO in playing a central coordinating role and prioritizing the procurement needs of COVAX.

Mr. President,

We live in an era of great challenges, however, it is also a time of great hope. Not long ago, the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China was held successfully. The Congress solemnly proclaimed to the world China's resolute decisions and sent out a strong message of the times to safeguard world peace, promote common development and build a community with a shared future for mankind.

China will, as always, take an active part in global biosecurity governance, work with the international community to address the increasingly severe biosecurity challenges, and to enhance the universality, authority and effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention, so as to make new contributions to global security and development.

Thank you, Mr. President.