

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

11 August 2023

English only

Second Session

Geneva, 7-18 August 2023

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

Proposed Considerations Related to the Development of an Article X Mechanism

Submitted by the Friends of the Chair on International Cooperation and Assistance

Having conducted informal consultations and considered the discussions during the second session of the Working Group, the Friends of the Chair on International Cooperation and Assistance consider that the following elements could contribute to the fulfilment by the Working Group of its mandate in accordance with Part II, Paragraph 18 of the Final Document of the Ninth BWC Review Conference:

1. The Working Group could recommend that States Parties establish a mechanism that will uphold the right of all States Parties to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, material, and scientific and technological information for the use of biological agents and toxins for peaceful purposes, in a manner designed to avoid hampering the economic or technological development of States Parties or international cooperation in the field of peaceful biological activities.
2. This mechanism could help ensure that international cooperation and assistance as envisioned by Article X of the Convention is fully implemented and fosters complementarities and synergies with other international cooperation assistance efforts that are relevant to the Convention. The mechanism could further ensure that international cooperation and assistance are undertaken in a manner that supports the implementation of all aspects of the Convention and contributes to the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals.
3. The mechanism could consist of the following elements:
 - (a) An open-ended **International Cooperation and Assistance Committee** aimed at facilitating international cooperation activities on all aspects of the Convention, with a particular focus on Article X. The Committee could meet back-to-back with the Meeting of States Parties or the Review Conference, as required. Such meetings could provide, *inter alia*, an opportunity for the Chair of the Steering Group to update States Parties on the Steering Group's work and for States Parties to express their views on the work of the Steering Group and to raise any broader issues or challenges regarding the full and effective implementation of Article X.

(b) An **International Cooperation and Assistance Steering Group** that could, *inter alia*:

- i. Develop, review, and oversee the implementation of international cooperation and assistance activities,
- ii. Monitor and map cooperation and assistance activities related to the Convention, including cooperation and assistance activities undertaken by relevant international, intergovernmental, and regional organizations, with a view to advising BWC States Parties on opportunities for cooperation and assistance and facilitating their engagement therein.
- iii. Assist in the identification and matchmaking of offers and requests and identify and foster complementarities between cooperation activities between and among the Convention, States Parties, and relevant International Organizations, while seeking to avoid duplication.
- iv. Oversee the International Cooperation and Assistance Fund pursuant to a Terms of Reference (TOR).

(c) The Steering Group could be open to all States Parties and operate on the basis of consensus. It could be comprised of fifteen representatives of States Parties nominated for a specified period, taking into account the principle of geographical representation. The distribution of membership could be as follows:

- i. The Group of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and Other States could have seven seats, distributed according to geographical regions. Of these seven seats, three could be reserved for Africa while two each could be reserved for Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, respectively.
- ii. The Western European and Others Group (WEOG) could have five seats representing North America, Western Europe, and Asia-Pacific.
- iii. The Eastern European Group (EEG) could have two seats.
- iv. There could be one floating seat distributed for States Parties not belonging to a regional group, to be allocated as appropriate and as decided by the Steering Group.

(d) The Steering Group could be chaired by one of its members for a specified rotational term on the basis of geographic regions. The costs of the Steering Group and of related support provided by the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) could be financed by assessed contributions of States Parties to the Convention.

(e) A results-oriented **International Cooperation and Assistance Action Plan**, to be developed by the Steering Group, that could provide guidance for the identification and development of international cooperation and assistance projects, programmes, and initiatives that are relevant to the Convention. The Action Plan could take into account the need for systematic linkages with other bodies and mechanisms of the Convention, relevant international, intergovernmental, and regional organizations, and reflect gaps and needs identified through strengthened Article X reporting guidelines and standards.

(f) An **International Cooperation and Assistance Fund** funded by contributions by States Parties and other actors in a position to provide them. The Fund could function in a manner that encourages predictability and stability. The following considerations could underpin the implementation of the Fund:

- i. Any State Party or group of States Parties could submit a proposal(s) for funding consideration by the Steering Group.
- ii. Donor States Parties could identify projects for potential funding, consistent with any requirements of the Donor States Parties.

- iii. The Steering Group could facilitate consultations between Donor States Parties or other potential funding sources and requesting States Party or group of States Parties on the funding of their proposed projects.

(g) An **International Cooperation and Assistance Database System** comprising platforms accessible through the Convention's website, administered and maintained by the Implementation Support Unit, including: the database on cooperation and assistance established by the Seventh Review Conference, to be further enhanced in accordance with the decision of the Eighth Review Conference; an online platform to promote exchange of information and best practices related to biosafety and biosecurity frameworks, towards enhancing cooperation under Article X; a database to facilitate assistance under the framework of Article VII.

(h) **Additional positions within the Implementation Support Unit (ISU)** responsible for supporting and implementing the relevant tasks listed above, as required.
