
**Seventh 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**

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**Follow-up to the recommendations and decisions
of the Sixth Review Conference and the question of
future review of the Convention**

**Proposal for structured and systematic review of science and
technology developments under the Convention**

Submitted by India

I. Background

1. The rapid pace of developments in biological science and technology (S&T) is reshaping the world today and it is recognized widely that the biotechnology revolution will transform society in the 21st century. There have been significant and rapidly evolving developments in fields relevant to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) since the Convention came into force in 1975 in areas such as biotechnology, genomics, proteomics, bioinformatics and computational biology, systems biology, drug discovery, design and delivery, synthetic biology and biological engineering. In view of their possible applications for peaceful as well as other purposes, these developments could have implications for the implementation of the BTWC.

2. Article XII of the BTWC provides that the five-yearly review of the Convention “shall take into account any new scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention”. S&T developments are also of special importance in the context of Article X of the Convention. The Article states that the States Parties will facilitate, and have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of inter alia scientific and technological information for the use of biological agents and toxins for peaceful purposes. States Parties in a position to do so shall cooperate in contributing to the further development and application of scientific discoveries in the field of biology for the prevention of disease, or for other peaceful purposes. It also states that the Convention shall be implemented in a manner designed to avoid hampering inter alia the technological development of States Parties in the field of peaceful biological activities.

II. Review of scientific and technological developments in past review conferences and the recent intersessional process

3. Successive review conferences of the Convention have given due attention to S&T developments which are relevant to the Convention and its implementation. The Second Review Conference concluded that the scope of Article I covers S&T developments relevant to the Convention. The Second, Third and Fourth Review Conferences reaffirmed that Article I applies to developments in the fields of microbiology, genetic engineering, biotechnology, molecular biology and genome studies. The Sixth Review Conference also reaffirmed that Article I of the Convention applies to all S&T developments in the life sciences and in other fields of science relevant to the Convention. This applies to all naturally or artificially created or altered microbial and other biological agents and toxins as well as their components, regardless of their origin and method of production and whether they affect humans, animals or plants and in quantities that have no justification for prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes. As regards Article X, Review Conferences have urged states parties to increase S&T cooperation and adopt positive measures for the peaceful uses of biological agents and toxins including inter-alia through exchange and sharing of scientific and technological knowledge, training of personnel, transfer of materials and equipments, active promotion of contacts between scientists and technical personnel consistent with the Convention.

4. The annual meetings of the intersessional period following the Sixth Review Conference have covered specific S&T related areas. The 2007 meetings covered “oversight, education, awareness raising, and adoption and/or development of codes of conduct with the aim of preventing misuse in the context of advances in bio-science and bio-technology research with the potential of use for purposes prohibited by the Convention”. The 2009 meetings covered the issue of enhancing international cooperation, assistance and exchange in biological sciences and technology for peaceful purposes. Discussions on developments in S&T of relevance to the Convention have also been a regular feature of the side events during the formal BTWC meetings at least since the 2006 Review Conference, for instance during the Meeting of States Parties in 2010.

5. The need for systematic review of S&T developments was recognized by United Nations Secretary-General in his statement to the 2010 Meeting of States Parties. He said: “With the pace of advances in biological science and technology growing ever quicker, there is a pressing need for a structured and regular means of monitoring developments and assessing their implications”. In preparations for the Seventh Review Conference, the need for structured and systematic review of S&T developments relevant to the Convention has been identified by a large number of member states as an important issue.

III. Proposal

6. In light of the above, it is proposed that the Seventh Review Conference take a decision regarding structured and systematic review of S&T developments within the framework of the Convention. The aim is to build consensus among Member States based on a thorough review of developments in life sciences and biotechnology that are of relevance to the BWC, consistent with Article XII of the Convention.

7. The review of S&T developments could include the following:

(a) Review new scientific and technological developments of relevance to the Convention:

- Identify developments which could have a potential for uses contrary to the provisions of the Convention;
 - Identify developments which are of particular concern with respect to bioterrorism;
- (b) Review new Science & Technological developments of special relevance to disease surveillance, diagnosis and treatment of pandemics:
- Identify science and technological developments which would be of particular benefit to developing countries;
- (c) Identify emerging risks in dual use research and development involving new S&T developments of relevance to the Convention:
- Examine voluntary Codes of Conduct inter alia for scientists, academia and industry in fields relevant to the Convention;
 - Identify communication strategies about risks and benefits of life sciences and biotechnology;
- (d) Review S&T related developments in other multilateral organizations such as WHO, OIE, FAO and IPPC which are of relevance to the Convention.

8. Such a review of S&T developments could be undertaken through an agenda item at the annual Meetings of Experts and Meetings of State Parties and discussions could focus on topics mentioned in paragraph 7 above. Reports of such meetings containing review of S&T developments, assessment of their implications to the Convention and recommendations, could be discussed and forwarded by the Meeting of State Parties to the next Review Conference, which shall consider such reports in accordance with Article XII of the Convention and take appropriate decisions. The Meeting of Experts may be structured so as to facilitate the broadest possible contribution of industry, academia and the scientific community.
