
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

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2020 Meeting

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Meeting of Experts on Strengthening National Implementation Geneva, 3 September 2021

Item 9 of the agenda

Adoption of the factual report reflecting the deliberations of the meeting, including possible outcomes

Report of the 2020 Meeting of Experts on strengthening national implementation¹

I. Introduction

1. At the 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 (BWC/CONF.VIII/4), States Parties decided to hold annual meetings and that the first such meeting, in December 2017, would seek to make progress on issues of substance and process for the period before the next Review Conference, with a view to reaching consensus on an intersessional process.

2. At the Meeting of States Parties in December 2017, States Parties reached consensus on the following:

“(a) Reaffirming previous intersessional programmes from 2003-2015 and retaining the previous structures: annual Meetings of States Parties preceded by annual Meetings of Experts.

(b) The purpose of the intersessional programme is to discuss, and promote common understanding and effective action on those issues identified for inclusion in the intersessional programme.

(c) Recognizing the need to balance an ambition to improve the intersessional programme within the constraints – both financial and human resources – facing States Parties, twelve days are allocated to the intersessional programme each year from 2018- 2020. The work in the intersessional period will be guided by the aim of strengthening the implementation of all articles of the Convention in order to better respond to current challenges. The Meetings of Experts for eight days will be held back to back and at least three months before the annual Meetings of States Parties of four days each. Maximum use would be made of the Sponsorship Programme funded

¹ Any entry listed in this document does not imply the expression of any opinion regarding, and is without prejudice to, the legal status of any country or territory or of its authorities.



by voluntary contributions in order to facilitate participation of developing States Parties in the meetings of the intersessional programme.

(d) The meetings of the MSP will be chaired by a representative of the EEG in 2018, a representative of the Western Group in 2019 and a representative of the Group of Non-Aligned Movement and Other States in 2020. The annual Chair will be supported by two annual vice-chairs, one from each of the other two regional groups. In addition to the reports of the Meetings of Experts, the Meetings of States Parties will consider the annual reports of the ISU and progress on universality. The Meetings of Experts will be chaired in 2018 by [the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States Parties to the BWC] (MX 1 and MX 2) and the Western Group (MX 3 and MX 4), in 2019 by EEG (MX 1 and MX 2) and NAM (MX 3 and MX 4), and in 2020 by Western Group (MX 1 and MX 2) and by EEG (MX 3 and MX 4); MX 5 will be chaired by the regional group chairing the MSP.

	<i>MSP</i>	<i>MX 1</i>	<i>MX 2</i>	<i>MX 3</i>	<i>MX 4</i>	<i>MX 5</i>
2018	EEG	NAM	NAM	WG	WG	EEG
2019	WG	EEG	EEG	NAM	NAM	WG
2020	NAM	WG	WG	EEG	EEG	NAM

All meetings will be subject mutatis mutandis to the rules of procedure of the Eighth Review Conference.

(e) The Meetings of Experts would be open-ended and will consider the following topics:

[...]

MX.3 (1 day): Strengthening national implementation:

- Measures related to Article IV of the Convention;
- CBM submissions in terms of quantity and quality;
- Various ways to promote transparency and confidence building under the Convention;
- Role of international cooperation and assistance under Article X, in support of strengthening the implementation of the Convention
- Issues related to Article III, including effective measures of export control, in full conformity with all Articles of the Convention, including Article X.

[...]

(f) Each Meeting of Experts will prepare for the consideration of the annual Meeting of States Parties a factual report reflecting its deliberations, including possible outcomes. All meetings, both of Experts and of States Parties will reach any conclusions or results by consensus. The Meeting of States Parties will be responsible for managing the intersessional programme, including taking necessary measures with respect to budgetary and financial matters by consensus with a view to ensuring the proper implementation of the intersessional programme. The Ninth Review Conference will consider the work and outcomes it receives from the Meetings of States Parties and the Meetings of Experts and decide by consensus on any inputs from the intersessional programme and on any further action.”

3. By resolution 75/88, adopted without a vote on 7 December 2020, the General Assembly, *inter alia*, requested the Secretary-General to continue to render the necessary assistance to the depositary Governments of the Convention and to continue to provide such services as may be required for the conduct and the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the review conferences.

II. Organization of the Meeting of Experts

4. In accordance with the decisions of the Eighth Review Conference, the 2017 Meeting of States Parties and the 2019 Meeting of States Parties, the Meeting of Experts was originally scheduled to take place on 31 August 2020. However, the Meeting was postponed several times due to the COVID-19 pandemic and, according to the agreement by States Parties by written silence procedure², it was instead convened at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 3 September 2021, chaired by Mr. Arman Baissuanov of Kazakhstan.

5. On 3 September 2021, the Meeting of Experts adopted its agenda (BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/1) as proposed by the Chair.

6. At the same meeting, following a suggestion by the Chair, the Meeting of Experts adopted as its rules of procedure, *mutatis mutandis*, the rules of procedure of the Eighth Review Conference, as contained in document BWC/CONF.VIII/2.

7. Mr. Daniel Feakes, Chief, Implementation Support Unit, Office for Disarmament Affairs, Geneva, served as Secretary of the Meeting of Experts. Mr. Hermann Lampalzer, Political Affairs Officer, Implementation Support Unit, served as Deputy Secretary and Ms. Ngoc Phuong van der Blij, Political Affairs Officer, also served in the secretariat.

III. Participation at the Meeting of Experts

8. Ninety-five delegations participated in the Meeting of Experts as follows: Algeria; Angola; Argentina; Armenia; Australia; Austria; Azerbaijan; Barbados; Belarus; Belgium; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Botswana; Brazil; Brunei Darussalam; Bulgaria; Canada; Chile; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Cuba; Czech Republic; Democratic Republic of Congo; Dominican Republic; Ecuador; Estonia; Finland; France; Georgia; Germany; Ghana; Guyana; Holy See; Hungary; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Iraq; Ireland; Italy; Japan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Kuwait; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Lebanon; Libya; Lithuania; Madagascar; Malaysia; Mauritius; Mexico; Montenegro; Morocco; Myanmar; Nepal; Netherlands; Nigeria; North Macedonia; Norway; Pakistan; Panama; Peru; Philippines; Poland; Portugal; Qatar; Republic of Korea; Romania; Russian Federation; Saudi Arabia; Senegal; Serbia; Sierra Leone; Slovakia; Slovenia; South Africa; Spain; Sri Lanka; Sudan; Sweden; Switzerland; Thailand; Togo; Tunisia; Turkey; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United States of America; Uruguay; Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of); Yemen; Zambia; and Zimbabwe.

9. In addition, one State that had signed the Convention but had not yet ratified it participated in the Meeting of Experts without taking part in the making of decisions, as provided for in rule 44, paragraph 1 of the rules of procedure: Egypt.

10. Two States, Chad and Israel, neither parties nor signatories to the Convention, participated in the Meeting of Experts as observers, in accordance with rule 44, paragraph 2.

² See the letters from the Chair of the 2020 Meeting of States Parties dated 28 July 2020, 23 November 2020 and 9 February 2021

11. The United Nations, including, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) attended the Meeting of Experts in accordance with rule 44, paragraph 3.

12. The European Union (EU), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the World Health Organization (WHO) were granted observer status to participate in the Meeting of Experts in accordance with rule 44, paragraph 4.

13. In addition, at the invitation of the Chair, in recognition of the special nature of the topics under consideration at this Meeting and without creating a precedent, an independent expert participated in informal exchanges in the open sessions as a Guest of the Meeting of Experts: Dr. Sonia Drobysz, Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC).

14. Thirteen non-governmental organizations and research institutes attended the Meeting of Experts under rule 44, paragraph 5.

15. A list of all participants in the Meeting of Experts is contained in document BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/INF.1.

IV. Work of the Meeting of Experts

16. In accordance with the provisional agenda (BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/1) and an annotated programme of work prepared by the Chair, the Meeting of Experts had substantive discussions on issues allocated by the 2017 Meeting of States Parties.

17. Under agenda item 4 (“Measures related to Article IV of the Convention”), the Implementation Support Unit provided a brief update on BWC National Contact Points, and Iraq and Cuba introduced working papers (BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/WP.3 and BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/WP.5 respectively). France and the Organization of American States (OAS) made technical presentations. Dr. Sonia Drobysz from the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC) gave a presentation as a Guest of the Meeting. There then followed an interactive discussion on the agenda item in which the following States Parties participated: Brazil; China; France; India; Japan; Kenya; Mexico; Pakistan; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Sudan; Switzerland; United States of America; and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). The European Union (EU) and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) made statements. Various views were expressed during the consideration of this agenda item.

18. Under agenda item 5 (“Confidence Building Measures (CBM) submissions in terms of quantity and quality”), the Implementation Support Unit provided a briefing. There then followed an interactive discussion on the agenda item in which the following States Parties participated: Brazil; China; Cuba; Ireland; Italy; Japan; Mexico; Pakistan; Russian Federation; Switzerland; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United States of America; and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). The European Union made a statement. Various views were expressed during the consideration of this agenda item taking into account, inter alia, relevant sections of Final Documents of previous Review Conferences.

19. Under agenda item 6 (“Various ways to promote transparency and confidence building under the Convention”), France introduced a working paper

(BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/WP.4) on behalf of Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Spain. There then followed an interactive discussion on the agenda item in which the following States Parties participated: Algeria; Brazil; Cuba; France; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Mexico; Russian Federation; Switzerland; and United States of America. The European Union made a statement. Various views were expressed during the consideration of this agenda item.

20. Under agenda item 7 (“Role of international cooperation and assistance under Article X, in support of strengthening the implementation of the Convention”) Japan and the United States of America introduced working papers (BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/WP.1 and BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/WP.2 respectively). There then followed an interactive discussion on the agenda item in which the following States Parties participated: China; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Sri Lanka; Switzerland; United States of America; and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). Various views were expressed during the consideration of this agenda item.

21. Under agenda item 8 (“Issues related to Article III, including effective measures of export control, in full conformity with all Articles of the Convention, including Article X”), there was an interactive discussion on the agenda item in which the following States Parties participated: Brazil; Cuba; India; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Pakistan; Russian Federation; Switzerland; Ukraine; and United States of America. Various views were expressed during the consideration of this agenda item.

22. In the course of its work, the Meeting of Experts was able to draw on a number of working papers submitted by States Parties, as well as on statements and presentations made by States Parties, international organizations and the Guest of the Meeting, which were circulated in the Meeting.

23. The Chair, under his own responsibility and initiative, has prepared a paper listing considerations, lessons, perspectives, recommendations, conclusions and proposals drawn from the presentations, statements, working papers and interventions on the agenda items under discussion at the Meeting. The Meeting of Experts noted that this paper had not been agreed and had no status. It was the Chair’s view that the paper could assist delegations in their preparations for the Meeting of States Parties in November 2021 and also in their consideration of how best to “discuss, and promote common understanding and effective action on” the topics in accordance with the consensus reached at the 2017 Meeting of States Parties. The paper prepared by the Chair, in consultation with States Parties, is attached as Annex I to this report.

V. Documentation

24. A list of official documents of the Meeting of Experts, including the working papers submitted by States Parties, is contained in Annex II to this report. All documents on this list are available on the BWC website at <https://meetings.unoda.org/section/bwc-mx-2020-mx3-documents/> and through the United Nations Official Document System (ODS), at <http://documents.un.org>.

VI. Conclusion of the Meeting of Experts

25. At its closing meeting on 3 September 2021, the Meeting of Experts adopted its report by consensus, as contained in document BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/CRP.1 as orally amended, to be issued as document BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/2.

Annex I

Summary report

Submitted by the Chairperson of the 2020 Meeting of Experts on Strengthening National Implementation

1. The Chairperson, under his own responsibility and initiative, has prepared this paper which lists considerations, lessons, perspectives, recommendations, conclusions and proposals drawn from the presentations, statements, working papers and interventions on the agenda items under discussion at the Meeting. The Meeting of Experts noted that this paper had not been agreed and had no status. It was the Chairperson's view, however, that the paper could assist delegations in their preparations for the Meeting of States Parties in November 2021 and also in their consideration of how best to "discuss and promote common understanding and effective action on" the topics in accordance with the consensus reached at the 2017 Meeting of States Parties.

2. The Chairperson would like to express his gratitude to delegations for their active participation in the Meeting, particularly for the various working papers that were submitted and which together with oral statements and the constructive debate, as well as the interventions by relevant international organizations and by the Guest of the Meeting, have served as the basis for this summary report. The procedural report of the Meeting details which delegations spoke under the different agenda items, and which delegations introduced working papers, so such information will not be repeated in this summary report.

3. Discussions cut across the different agenda items, as some of the issues are intertwined and national implementation addresses various articles of the Convention. It emerged from the discussions that there is a variety of proposals on strengthening national implementation and efforts are being undertaken by a number of States Parties to enhance the domestic implementation of the Convention.

I. Agenda item 4 – measures related to Article IV of the Convention

4. Several States Parties took the floor under this agenda item and shared their views on measures related to Article IV of the Convention. The Implementation Support Unit provided an update on information regarding National Contact Points to the BWC. As of September 2021, 73% of all States Parties have provided national contact information. Two working papers were presented under this agenda item. One State Party, one Guest of the Meeting and two international organization made technical presentations.

5. Some States Parties reiterated the importance of implementing an effective national biosecurity regime, including the development of a biosecurity culture within relevant institutions. Additionally, the value of legislative or regulatory measures, awareness-raising efforts, and biosafety and biosecurity training and education programmes was mentioned. In that perspective, States Parties noted that biorisk management is essential in the laboratory quality management system and that the establishment of a dedicated national committee could contribute to enhancing biosafety and biosecurity measures at the national level.

6. The concept of a national biorisk management committee was presented. The following objectives were mentioned: 1) Strengthen national capacities in biosafety and biosecurity in related institutions and facilities, including the private sector; 2) Promote

effective biorisk management systems in biological laboratories in relevant institutions and facilities, including the private sector; and 3) Develop policies and strategies to reduce biorisks.

7. The main challenges faced include limited funding; insufficient means for risk assessment; lack of a comprehensive and sustainable security culture; unsustainability of programmes and procedures; overlapping roles and responsibilities due to weak responsibility culture; and poor coordination between the relevant authorities.

8. Some States Parties noted that establishing a national action plan, as well as a national coordination mechanism, can contribute to effectively implementing the BWC.

9. Several States Parties briefed the Meeting on initiatives which they are undertaking to support the implementation of the Convention in developing countries. In terms of legislative assistance, reference was made to the benefit of providing technical assistance to determine gaps between national laws or norms and international standard and to implement laws and regulations in accordance with these standards.

10. Furthermore, one State Party noted that legislative control mechanisms could be reinforced through a national inspection system that provides for the verification of compliance with current national legislation. Such an inspection system should cover all relevant biological facilities. Among the control modalities implemented were routine inspections, inspections for the granting of biological safety authorizations and inspections to verify compliance with the conditions of validity of the authorizations granted.

11. Other States Parties noted that exchanging views on national biosecurity inspection mechanisms within the BWC as well as effective national biosafety regimes also helps to strengthen capacity and improve preparedness. In addition, “knowledge portals”, certifications, guidelines and handbooks for institutions handling dangerous pathogens were listed as valuable ways to strengthen national institutions.

12. One State Party made a technical presentation on legal measures taken, both domestically and at the regional level. The presentation focused on how those legal measures are effectively implemented by laboratories, especially in line with Article IV and Article X of the Convention. While activities related to biological sciences are promoted, it was highlighted that careful monitoring of risks related to highly pathogenic agents are also needed. It was underlined that biological activities take place within national, regional and international networks.

13. It was noted that the regulation of microorganisms and toxins promotes a biorisk management culture throughout the scientific community in accordance with Article IV, while also allowing the development of activities in accordance with Article X. It was discussed that activities of institutes handling dangerous pathogens can be monitored through a four-step system: 1) Biorisk assessment on demand; 2) On-site inspections, both announced and unannounced; 3) Permanent administrative data control; and 4) Vigilance on signals.

14. The Guest of the Meeting delivered a technical presentation on legislative drafting and legal assistance. A wide range of assistance and tools was presented to States Parties potentially in need of strengthening their legislative framework, including awareness-raising, legal analysis, as well as legislative drafting in support of Article IV of the Convention. An analysis of the legislative implementation measures and potential gaps at the national level was recommended for the full and effective implementation of the Convention.

15. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of robust legislation has been noted, with many States Parties initiating the drafting of legislation and regulations to respond to the pandemic and regulate the safe handling of the virus. Assistance provided to States Parties included awareness-raising activities on BWC implementation, advice on

CBM preparation and submission, and the conduct of legislative analyses of existing laws through a survey tool.

16. States Parties were briefed by a regional organization on initiatives undertaken to support its Member States to fully implement their disarmament and non-proliferation obligations and commitments. Assistance programmes include legislative and technical assistance; capacity building; outreach and awareness-raising; and work to promote regional and bilateral cooperation. Examples of successful cooperation activities among Member States were presented, such as peer review exercises, virtual in-country training courses and regional conferences, where experts and organizations were invited. While many States Parties noted the added value of peer reviews exercises as means of sharing best practices and to promote transparency, it was also recalled that peer reviews are not mechanisms under the BWC.

17. The Meeting was informed of challenges and concerns faced by international organizations dealing with prevention, preparedness and response to biological incidents, in particular the misuse of biological agents by non-state actors. While discussing strategies to counter bioterrorism, several considerations were shared with States Parties: 1) work from law enforcement representatives is carried out through an inter-agency approach, and success in mitigating biological threats is contingent on cooperation with the animal, plant and public health communities among others; 2) A consistent lack of solid national legislative frameworks, which can hinder law enforcement responses; 3) The level of national awareness of dual-use items should be further strengthened by States Parties, by defining lists of items in national legislation. The illicit movement of such items is increasing, including on the darknet, which poses challenges for border police and customs authorities; and 4) A need for effective law enforcement capabilities to monitor non-state actor activities, including secure multi-agency information sharing and frequent coordination, and regular biological threat analysis (as it relates to non-state actors), disease surveillance capabilities quickly able to detect outbreaks.

18. It was reiterated that national implementation under Article IV is a broad obligation that requires implementation of a wide range of measures at multiple levels, and the benefits of developing a comprehensive approach at the domestic level was underlined by many States Parties. The development and implementation of a holistic national strategy, comprising efforts to address the full range of biological threats, as well as engaging will all possible stakeholders, such as international partners, industry and academia, was recommended.

19. Some States Parties reiterated the need for a full and balanced implementation of all provisions of the Convention and expressed the view that the provisions of Articles III and IV should not be used to impose restrictions and/or limitations on the transfer or exchange of scientific knowledge, technology, equipment and materials.

II. Agenda item 5 – Confidence Building Measures (CBM) submissions in terms of quantity and quality

20. The Implementation Support Unit provided an update on CBM submissions and informed States Parties that CBM reports had been received from 85 States Parties in 2020, the highest number ever submitted. During the Meeting, the Unit informed that the 86th CBM in 2021 had just been submitted, therefore already exceeding the total submitted in 2020. Furthermore, the Unit informed States Parties that additional CBMs are still to be submitted, indicating a strong positive trend in the number of CBM submissions.

21. Many States Parties welcomed the increasing number of CBM submissions, expressed appreciation for the ISU's effort in promoting CBM submissions, and reiterated the importance of improving and strengthening CBMs, as they are the only formal tool under the

BWC for promoting transparency and building confidence amongst States Parties, and as such they play an important role in preventing and reducing the occurrence of ambiguities, doubts and suspicions among States Parties. The importance of strengthening the CBMs in terms of quantity and quality was therefore again emphasized and all States Parties were encouraged to participate in the CBM process.

22. While welcoming the increased number of submissions, and seeing the rising trend as encouraging, some States Parties noted that the overall level of CBM submissions still remains low. For example, the proportion of States Parties submitting CBMs has never exceeded 50% annually. During the discussion, the ISU informed States Parties that 52 States Parties had never submitted CBMs and possible ways to encourage them to submit for the first time should be further explored.

23. Different views were expressed regarding the nature of CBMs. Some States Parties considered them as politically-binding, while other States Parties saw them as voluntary in nature. In the discussions, some States Parties expressed the view that CBMs are not a substitute for verification and therefore cannot be considered as a tool for assessing compliance. These States Parties reiterated earlier proposals on a legally binding instrument with verification provisions, arguing that it would constitute the only method for assessing compliance under the Convention. Other States Parties noted that the CBMs were the only formal tool for States Parties to demonstrate transparency and their compliance with the Convention and to address ambiguities and doubts.

24. Regardless of the binding or non-binding character of CBMs, some States Parties suggested making better use of the exchange of information, particularly for fostering cooperation and assistance under Article X. While the added value of CBMs as a tool to further promote cooperation and assistance under Article X assess was noted by some States Parties, other States Parties expressed caution about using CBMs as a tool for analyses of national activities.

25. The Meeting was briefed on CBM training courses for developing States Parties that had been conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and many States Parties recognised the value of awareness-raising activities, workshops and training modules for States Parties needing assistance with CBM submissions. In that regard, States Parties in need of assistance were encouraged to make use of the CBM assistance tools available, as well as to share best practices on their CBM submissions and the challenges they face.

26. Several concrete proposals were made to enhance the utility of CBMs, including: 1) Addressing a potential reporting gap in the declaration of vaccine production facilities under CBM Form G which does not take account of an increasing trend for companies to outsource vaccine production and marketing authorisation processes to facilities located in other countries; 2) Supplementing Form G's information on human vaccine production facilities with similar data on animal vaccine production facilities; 3) Including information on military biological facilities located on the territory of other States; 4) Encouraging a step-by-step approach to CBM submission for States Parties that have either never submitted a CBM report or have experienced difficulties in regularly doing so. It was suggested that these proposed modifications to the CBM forms should be studied informally so that any necessary decisions may be taken at the Ninth Review Conference. However, some States Parties, while noting the usefulness, relevance and comprehensiveness of the CBMs, did not see the need to expand the scope beyond those forms available, to avoid burdening States Parties.

III. Agenda item 6 – Various ways to promote transparency and confidence building under the Convention

27. Several States Parties submitted a joint working paper under this agenda item and one State Party made a technical presentation. A number of States Parties informed the Meeting of Experts about different voluntary activities or initiatives which they have conducted to improve transparency and build confidence in the implementation of the Convention. Reference was made to activities such as peer reviews, voluntary visits and transparency exercises.

28. The Meeting discussed initiatives, activities and measures to promote transparency and confidence-building under the Convention. It was reiterated by some States Parties that these activities can strengthen national implementation, facilitate the sharing of best practices, improve information exchange and enhance international cooperation, in addition to increasing transparency. Additionally, some States Parties highlighted the need to explore additional measures, including potentially through the creation of an exchange platform for voluntary transparency exercises. It was suggested that such a platform could serve as a tool to facilitate and accompany national voluntary initiatives to organize transparency exercises and to facilitate the implementation of transparency measures. It was suggested that a dedicated yearly meeting could be held on the margins of the Meeting of Experts on Strengthening National Implementation. Furthermore, an exchange platform could support the objective of CBMs, namely, to strengthen international transparency. While acknowledging that such activities are neither a substitute for verification nor comparable with a compliance mechanism, some States Parties expressed the view that they could bring various benefits, including building a clearer sense of how States Parties are implementing the Convention.

29. Some other States Parties expressed caution about peer reviews, stating that such one-time activities cannot provide effective transparency and confidence-building related to compliance, particularly due to the lack of agreed criteria for assessing compliance at different facilities. Those States Parties further reiterated the view that peer reviews and compliance assessments should not be seen as additional measures for implementation of the Convention, as all States Parties are obliged to take measures for national implementation of the Convention. They added that compliance could only be assessed collectively through appropriate multilateral verification arrangements and highlighted the importance of efforts to strengthen the Convention in a balanced manner and in all its aspects. The view was expressed that voluntary transparency measures should not distract the attention of States Parties from a comprehensive strengthening of the Convention. These States Parties also pointed out that relevant work had been done in the past within the Ad Hoc Group.

30. The establishment of a set of standards and methodology to be applied for the rigorous assessment and evaluation of States Parties' implementation measures was suggested. Such structured standards and processes could serve as a facilitator of relation building, increase transparency between States Parties, improve effectiveness, and give space for experimenting with different approaches.

IV. Agenda item 7 – Role of international cooperation and assistance under Article X, in support of strengthening the implementation of the Convention

31. Under this agenda item, two working papers were introduced. Several States Parties reiterated the important role of international cooperation and assistance in support of strengthening the implementation of the Convention. Some States Parties informed the

Meeting about concrete activities they had undertaken to promote regional cooperation, and to support developing States Parties strengthen their domestic implementation of the Convention. Such activities include, for example, coordination of national law enforcement institutions and the improvement of disease surveillance capabilities. The concept of South-South cooperation was highlighted by many States Parties.

32. One State Party informed the Meeting about its support for the creation of the first ever online training course for BWC National Contact Points (NCPs) - in Southeast Asia -, which had been organised by the ISU. The initiative has been triggered by the constraints imposed by the pandemic. It was suggested that the online training course could be used as a model for regional training and assistance activities in the future, also as a means to strengthen capacity-building and foster regional networks. Other States Parties were encouraged to either consider organizing such online training courses on issues relating to the BWC, or to provide support to the ISU in organizing them. Many States Parties recognized the added value of online training courses, conducted as a substitute to in-person workshops, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

33. The online course also underlined the importance of empowering NCPs to fulfil obligations under the Convention. States Parties participating in the course informed about their national activities and obligations deriving from the Convention, including on the full implementation of the Convention and on the preparation and submission of CBMs. It was noted that challenges faced in preparing CBM reports stem from communication and reporting processes, including interaction with other relevant national agencies, collection of national data and information relevant for reporting, lack of clear authority to exercise the mandate, lack of awareness from other national institutions on the role of NCPs and on relevance of the BWC, and challenges in engaging the scientific community. Several concrete proposals were therefore made aimed at enhancing the utility and use of CBMs, such as the establishment of a cooperative network of relevant domestic stakeholders, whose support is often required to collect the necessary information and complete the forms.

34. Some States Parties suggested pre-recorded statements, infographics and other innovative methods as training tools on the provisions of the Convention. Such materials could be developed for frequently raised questions and made freely available on relevant digital platforms. It was pointed out that many stakeholders, beyond scientists, are involved in the implementation of the BWC and therefore simplified, user-friendly audio-visual training materials of short duration could be useful.

35. Some other States Parties mentioned the linkage between Article X and Article IV, when considering effective and full national implementation and how offers of assistance were often hampered by an incomplete understanding of States Parties' existing national implementation measures. Some States Parties noted that developing national capacities for response, investigation and mitigation requires bilateral, regional and international cooperation and assistance in particular in developing countries. they expressed concern that imposition of unilateral coercive measures (UCMs) or sanctions by a few States Parties on other BWC States Parties has impeded or created obstacles for capacity building for effective national implementation of the Convention. Others discussed difficulties and challenges they faced in receiving assistance and humanitarian and medical supplies due to UCMs imposed by other States Parties. They further reiterated the importance of the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of all provisions of the Convention. It was therefore suggested that the Ninth Review Conference could consider concrete measures to improve national implementation measures.

36. One State Party introduced a working paper, noting that evaluating the overall status of national implementation of the BWC by its States Parties, for example by examining national legislation and regulations, remains a significant challenge. It was also noted that, in order to prioritize specific assistance efforts in response to requests to promote national

implementation where it is needed most, information about which States Parties may have challenges and in what areas is vital but remains difficult to ascertain. Therefore, the proposal envisages a two-part implementation support project, comprising a comprehensive, user-friendly, and widely accessible online database of national implementation measures, as well as pilot projects for national implementation with follow-up action plans.

V. Agenda item 8 – Issues related to Article III, including effective measures of export control, in full conformity with all Articles of the Convention, including Article X

37. Under this agenda item, several States Parties referred to the importance of effective export control measures in conformity with the Convention and recalled agreements and common understandings reached in this regard by States Parties at previous meetings. Many States Parties took the opportunity to inform the Meeting of Experts about national measures that they have adopted to implement Article III of the Convention.

38. It was suggested by some States Parties that significant efforts still need to be made to address existing regulatory gaps. Furthermore, it was pointed out that the implementation of the relevant measures varies greatly from one State Party to another. The importance of establishing a structured, comprehensive export control system for equal implementation of all Articles under the Convention was noted.

39. Some States Parties reiterated that any national export control measures should be in full conformity with obligations under the Convention and conducive to the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of all its provisions. They noted that the obligations deriving from Article III and Article IV of the Convention should not be used to impose restrictions on the exchange of science and technology for peaceful purposes. They further reiterated that national legislation and regulations should be reviewed to ensure that they are in full conformity with Article X.

40. Some States Parties expressed the view that export controls, including effective licensing measures, promote the confidence of suppliers that transfers of equipment and technology are exclusively used for purposes permitted by the Convention, and thereby directly contribute to fulfilment of the undertakings set out in Article III, and that they also make a key contribution to upholding the prohibitions contained in Article I. Some noted that States Parties need to establish a mechanism that reassures and increases transparency on trade activities relevant to the Convention which includes an appropriate reporting procedure with regard to end-use and assurance that the end use will be consistent with the report.

41. Some States Parties reiterated the suggestion of multilaterally negotiated guidelines to address the objective of non-proliferation through export controls, to preserve integrity and balance within the Convention.

42. States Parties shared activities undertaken for the implementation of Article III, which include the issuing of standard operating procedures for exchange of samples, simplified procedures and guidelines for the import, export and exchange of materials. Others presented domestic efforts to promote international exchange in biotechnology and the life sciences for peaceful purposes within the framework of Article X, such as through dual-use item lists; national control lists of goods, technology, materials and equipment related to biotechnology and life sciences.

Annex II

List of documents of the 2020 Meeting of Experts on Strengthening National Implementation

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/1	Provisional Agenda for the 2020 Meeting of Experts on Strengthening National Implementation - Submitted by the Chairperson
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/2	Report of the 2020 Meeting of Experts on Strengthening National Implementation
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/CRP.1 English only	Draft Report of the 2020 Meeting of Experts on Strengthening National Implementation – Submitted by the Chairperson
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/MISC.1 English/French/Spanish only	Provisional list of participants
BWC/MSP/2020/INF.1 English/French/Spanish only	List of participants
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/WP.1 English only	Online Training Course for Biological Weapons Convention National Contact Points in Southeast Asia: A Model Approach for Other Regions – Submitted by Japan
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/WP.2 English only	U.S. Project to Strengthen BWC National Implementation: An Offer of Assistance – Submitted by the United States of America
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/WP.3 Arabic and English only	Strengthening National Implementation: Iraq's National Biorisk Management Committee – Submitted by Iraq
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/WP.4 English and French only	An exchange Platform for voluntary transparency exercises – Terms of reference – Submitted by France
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/WP.5 Spanish only	Fortalecimiento de la Implementación Nacional –Presentado por Cuba