
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

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English only

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General exchange of views

A future science and technology review process

**Submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern
Ireland**

Introduction

1. Science and technology underpins the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. A review of developments that carry potential and actual benefits and risks to the object and purpose of the Convention has been a recurring feature of the Review Conference cycle since the First Review Conference in 1980 and was a standing agenda item in the last intersessional programme. We now need to find a more effective and timely way of addressing science and technology following the Eighth Review Conference. Many States Parties seem to share this view.

2. The United Kingdom believes that a full and meaningful consideration of the Convention and its implementation cannot take place without a proper understanding of relevant developments in science and technology in the life sciences and other disciplines. For this reason we propose that a future science and technology review process takes place first each year before any meetings that consider other aspects of the Convention to allow potential implications to be taken into account. It must be responsive to tasking from the States Parties; be able to present its own findings on its own initiative; have access to a wide range of expertise residing in academia, industry and other research institutes; and be open to all States Party experts wishing to participate.

3. The text of a decision on the establishment of such a process that could be included in the decisions and recommendations section of the final document at the Review Conference is attached in the annex.



Annex

Draft mandate for a BWC intersessional programme science and technology body

1. A group of government experts on science and technology will meet in the spring each year for one week to review and assess science and technology developments and how they may impact on the operation of the Convention; and to identify and submit appropriate proposals to enhance the effective implementation of the Convention, where agreed by consensus, to the annual Meeting of States Parties.
2. The group will respond to tasking from the annual Meeting of States Parties when advice or assessments are required on any specific topic with particular reference to its benefits and risks to the object and purpose of the Convention. The group will set its own agenda and invite relevant subject matter experts from academia, industry and other research organisations to support its work through inter alia participation at, and contributions to, its meetings. The group will submit technical reports on its meetings, and on relevant topics of its choosing, which set out the issues discussed in a comprehensive and balanced manner. Such reports are to provide a more robust and comprehensive technical basis to inform the deliberations of other meetings held in the intersessional programme.
3. In order to enable the States Parties to send experts with the appropriate knowledge, expertise and experience, the first tasks and topics to be addressed by the group will include [...].¹
4. Decisions on any actions that might be proposed or required in light of group reports will remain the sole responsibility of the States Parties. The group will be chaired by a scientific expert nominated and agreed by the States Parties; it will be supported by a scientific officer to be based in the Implementation Support Unit. The ISU will establish an electronic experts' communication system to enable exchanges of views and information on topics under consideration or relevant to the group's mandate.

¹ Tasks to be decided by States Parties at the Eighth Review Conference; this could include working on the Chinese proposal for a code of conduct as well as consideration of advances on specific science and technology topics.