

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
Geneva, 22-25 November 2021

Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness
Geneva, 6-7 September 2021
Item 10 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 assistance, response and preparedness¹

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) Recognising 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 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

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.



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:

[...]

MX4 (2 days): Assistance, response and preparedness:

- Practical challenges facing the implementation of Article VII, and possible solutions;
- A set of guidelines and formats to assist a State Party, if required, when submitting an application for assistance in the framework of Article VII;
- Procedures, including the establishment and use of the assistance database, to improve the prompt and efficient response without preconditions to a request of assistance by a State Party under Article VII, and coordination and cooperation among States Parties and with relevant international and regional organizations such as WHO, OIE and FAO, as appropriate;
- Examination of how the concept of mobile biomedical units might contribute to effective assistance, response and preparation with a view to enhancing implementation of the Convention;
- Exploration of approaches by which States Parties, individually or collectively, might contribute to the strengthening of international response capabilities for infectious disease outbreaks, whether natural or deliberate in origin;
- Exploration of means to prepare for, respond to and render assistance in case of the possible hostile use of biological agents and toxins against agriculture, livestock as well as the natural environment.

[...]

(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 from 1 to 2 September 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 from 6 to 7 September 2021, chaired by Ambassador Elena Kuzmanovska Biondic of the Republic of North Macedonia.

5. On 6 September 2021, the Meeting of Experts adopted its agenda ([BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/1](#)) as proposed by the Chair.

6. 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-six 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; State of Palestine; 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.

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

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.

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

14. A list of all participants in the Meeting of Experts is contained in document [BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/INF.1](#).

IV. Work of the Meeting of Experts

15. In accordance with the provisional agenda ([BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/1](#)) and an annotated programme of work prepared by the Chair, the Meeting of Experts had substantive discussions on the issues allocated by the 2017 Meeting of States Parties.

16. Under agenda item 4 (“Practical challenges facing the implementation of Article VII, and possible solutions”), there was an interactive discussion on the agenda item in which the following States Parties participated: Canada; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Iraq; Japan; Pakistan; and the United States of America. The European Union made a statement. Various views were expressed during the consideration of this agenda item.

17. Under agenda item 5 (“A set of guidelines and formats to assist a State Party, if required, when submitting an application for assistance in the framework of Article VII”), there was an interactive discussion on the agenda item in which the following States Parties participated: Cuba; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Russian Federation; Switzerland; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; and United States of America. Various views were expressed during the consideration of this agenda item.

18. Under agenda item 6 (“Procedures, including the establishment and use of the assistance database, to improve the prompt and efficient response without preconditions to a request of assistance by a State Party under Article VII, and coordination and cooperation among States Parties and with relevant international and regional organizations such as World Health Organization (WHO), World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), as appropriate”), France and India introduced a joint working paper ([BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/WP.3](#) and [Corr.1](#)). The World Health Organization made a technical presentation. There then followed an interactive discussion on the agenda item in which the following States Parties participated: Brazil; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Russian Federation; Switzerland; United States of America; and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). Various views were expressed during the consideration of this agenda item.

19. Under agenda item 7 (“Examination of how the concept of mobile biomedical units might contribute to effective assistance, response and preparation with a view to enhancing implementation of the Convention”), the Russian Federation introduced a working paper ([BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/WP.2](#)). There then followed an interactive discussion on the agenda item in which the following States Parties participated: Brazil; Canada; China; Cuba; France; Russian Federation; Switzerland; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; and United States of America. Various views were expressed during the consideration of this agenda item.

20. Under agenda item 8 (“Exploration of approaches by which States Parties, individually or collectively, might contribute to the strengthening of international response capabilities for infectious disease outbreaks, whether natural or deliberate in origin”), Japan and Germany introduced working papers ([BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/WP.1](#) and [BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/WP.5](#) respectively). Germany and Sri Lanka made technical presentations. There then followed an interactive discussion on the agenda item in which the

following States Parties participated: Brazil; China; Germany; Japan; Mexico; Panama; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Switzerland; Ukraine; and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the World Health Organization (WHO) made statements. Various views were expressed during the consideration of this agenda item.

21. Under agenda item 9 (“Exploration of means to prepare for, respond to and render assistance in case of the possible hostile use of biological agents and toxins against agriculture, livestock as well as the natural environment”), the United States of America introduced a working paper (BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/WP.4*). There then followed an interactive discussion on the agenda item in which the following States Parties participated: Brazil; China; Italy; Japan; Kenya; Russian Federation; 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 and international organizations which were circulated in the Meeting.

23. The Chair, under her 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-mx4-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 7 September 2021, the Meeting of Experts adopted its report by consensus, as contained in document BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/CRP.1 as orally amended, to be issued as document BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/2.

Annex I

Summary report

Submitted by the Chairperson of the 2020 Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness

1. The chairperson under her own responsibility and initiative has prepared this paper which lists considerations, perspectives, and conclusions drawn from the presentations, statements, working papers and interventions on the agenda items under discussion at the Meeting of Experts held on 6 and 7 September 2021. The Meeting of Experts noted that this paper had not been agreed and had no status. It is the Chairperson's view, however, that this 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 her 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 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 agenda items are intertwined. There was broad recognition of the need to make progress towards the operationalization of Article VII and a clear interest among delegations in advancing related proposals. The following sections summarize and synthesize substantive discussions under agenda items 4 to 9.

I. Agenda item 4 - Practical challenges facing the implementation of Article VII, and possible solutions

4. Under this agenda item, several States Parties stressed the need to operationalize the provisions of Article VII and establish response capabilities and plans before an event occurred. Discussions also touched upon the role of the Security Council in making a decision pursuant to Article VII, the potential coordination role of the United Nations in providing international assistance and lessons drawn from the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. The role of the Security Council in making a decision pursuant to Article VII and potential challenges for the timely provision of assistance were raised during the discussions, including the potential challenge of distinguishing between a natural and deliberate disease outbreak and the fact that there are no agreed procedures for investigating the claim of a requesting State Party under Article VII. Some States Parties expressed the view that the provision of assistance is not contingent upon or dependent on the outcome of an investigation. In this regard, some States Parties referred to the final document of the Eighth Review Conference in which States Parties in a position to do so are encouraged "to provide timely emergency assistance, if requested pending consideration of a decision by the Security Council".

6. Some States Parties noted that the Convention lacks an independent implementing organization to prepare, provide and coordinate assistance to a requesting State Party pursuant to Article VII. States Parties also highlighted the potential coordination role of the United Nations, with the help of States Parties and appropriate intergovernmental organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) in the event that Article VII might

be invoked. The United Nations Secretary-General's Mechanism (SGM) to investigate alleged use of biological weapons was also mentioned during the discussions.

7. Overall, there was broad acknowledgement that the lessons drawn from the COVID-19 pandemic show the importance of national preparedness for timely and effectively responding to disease outbreaks, whether of natural or deliberate origin. Several States Parties provided examples of how international assistance had enhanced response to the pandemic and referred also to ongoing programmes to further support national response programmes and capabilities, although some noted that certain national measures have negatively impacted the options for prompt, effective, and coordinated response to disease outbreaks, whether of natural or deliberate origin.

II. Agenda item 5 - A set of guidelines and formats to assist a State Party, if required, when submitting an application for assistance in the framework of Article VII

8. Under this agenda item, reference was made to two working papers circulated by a State Party at the 2018 Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness, which contained proposals for guidelines for States Parties for the submission of a request of assistance to the Security Council pursuant to Article VII, and possible options for requesting assistance independent of a Security Council approval.

9. Broad support was expressed for the proposed guidelines for requesting assistance under Article VII. Several States Parties conveyed their readiness to endorse the proposal at the Ninth Review Conference and their hope that consensus could be achieved on this topic. Some States Parties referred to elements of the proposal that in their view required further consideration. In this regard, it was also noted that the Security Council has no procedures or guidelines to inform its decision-making upon receipt of such a request for assistance under Article VII. Accordingly, it was suggested that further attention should also be given to this aspect. Some delegations stressed that the request for assistance should not only be submitted to the Security Council, but also be brought to the attention of other States Parties, with the suggestion that circulation of such a notice may be done by the Depositaries acting pursuant to Article XIV of the Convention. Other highlighted points related to the potential role of the Implementation Support Unit in the distribution of the request, the extent of information required for submitting a request and further understanding on the consideration of the request by the Security Council.

III. Agenda item 6 - Procedures, including the establishment and use of the assistance database, to improve the prompt and efficient response without preconditions to a request of assistance by a State Party under Article VII, and coordination and cooperation among States Parties and with relevant international and regional organizations such as World Health Organization (WHO), World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), as appropriate

10. Under this agenda item, two States Parties presented a joint working paper providing an update on their proposal for the establishment of a database for assistance under Article VII. It was recalled that States Parties at the Eighth Review Conference had supported the establishment of a database open to all States Parties to facilitate assistance under the framework of Article VII. However, the Conference did not take a corresponding decision to mandate the Implementation Support Unit to establish such a tool nor did it provide the required resources for its development.

11. The presentation highlighted that the database would be an important tool for States Parties to request and receive assistance and for the operationalization of Article VII. It

summarized specific pending issues and suggested a way forward for the operationalization of the database proposal, drawing on lessons learned from assistance databases operated by international organizations as well as technical input gathered from States Parties during a series of workshops conducted earlier in 2021. The presentation referred in particular to the objectives and functions of an Article VII database, the types and categories of assistance resources that may be registered, requested and/or offered as well as possible users and access, and proposed a modular approach to database development in three phases.

12. There was support from a number of States Parties for the proposal and several expressed their readiness to continue working towards its operationalization at the Ninth Review Conference. Some States Parties referred to topics that may require further clarification and discussion, including the financial implications of the creation and maintenance of a database. The need to address potential duplication with the Article X database, particularly in relation to the types of assistance resources that may be registered, requested and/or offered, was mentioned in this context. Views were expressed by some delegations that effective interfaces could be put in place for these purposes, as the two databases have different purposes, while others considered that the matter required further consideration.

13. The proposal to establish a voluntary trust fund as a type of assistance resource was also discussed. While several delegations expressed support for this proposal, the need to develop clear guidelines for the establishment and use of the fund was also highlighted. Other topics raised related to potential financial implications of database development and maintenance and to the suggestion to grant access to the database to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which raised concern from some delegations. Views were expressed by some delegations that NGOs may play an important role in providing emergency assistance and that access to NGOs would be at the discretion of States Parties and authorized through the respective authorities on a case by case basis.

14. Furthermore, views were expressed on the overall importance and possible elements of procedures for the provision of assistance under Article VII. Additionally, the WHO delivered a technical presentation on its work on biorisks and health security, which rests on three pillars: biosafety and biosecurity, deliberate events preparedness and response, and emerging technological threats.

IV. Agenda item 7 - Examination of how the concept of mobile biomedical units might contribute to effective assistance, response and preparation with a view to enhancing implementation of the Convention

15. Under this agenda item, one State Party presented an updated working paper, detailing the possibility of operationalising mobile biomedical units under the BWC. The presentation explained how biomedical units could serve to implement Article VII, as well as Article VI and Article X of the Convention. The value of such units for international deployments during the COVID-19 pandemic was also highlighted during the presentation.

16. While several States Parties expressed support for the proposal and there was broad recognition of the usefulness of mobile bio-medical units in the context of Article VII, several questions were raised in connection with the proposal. Some delegations noted that from the two options suggested for the implementation of the proposal, maintaining such units under the national responsibility of the relevant State Party appeared the most practical, such as through a roster of national mobile units. Views were expressed that placing them under the control of the BWC would have financial and institutional implications and would raise questions as to the framework under which they operate.

17. Clarification was provided to questions concerning technical issues arising from the deployment of the units, such as mechanisms for ensuring biosecurity and reliability of analyses. Furthermore, the importance of clarifying intellectual property rights concerning samples collected in the field was noted. Views were also expressed that the potential dual role of such units for, on the one hand, providing assistance to a requesting State Party under

Article VII and, on the other hand, conducting an investigation under Article VI, could be problematic. On a possible investigative role, some delegations expressed their concerns on the potential overlaps with the United Nations Secretary-General's Mechanism.

V. Agenda item 8 - Exploration of approaches by which States Parties, individually or collectively, might contribute to the strengthening of international response capabilities for infectious disease outbreaks, whether natural or deliberate in origin

18. Under this agenda item, two States Parties introduced working papers. The first presentation provided an update on a project conducted by the Implementation Support Unit on strengthening national, sub-regional and international capacities to prepare for and respond to the deliberate use of biological weapons. A number of delegations welcomed the initiative and noted a clear link and important synergies between Articles VII and X of the Convention. In the ensuing discussion, some States Parties also informed about national capacity-building projects or support given to such initiatives.

19. This was followed by the introduction of the second working paper, in which another State Party informed about efforts undertaken to strengthen capacities of the SGM. In particular, preliminary results from a virtual table-top exercise held in November 2020 were shared and an outlook to a planned Capstone field exercise was provided. Several delegations expressed their appreciation for the efforts to enhance SGM-related capacities and underlined their strong support for the Mechanism. They also stressed that the SGM represents the only operational tool available to investigate the alleged use of biological and toxin weapons.

20. Additionally, two State Parties delivered technical presentations on the issue of strengthening response capabilities. The first presentation informed about a State Party's national implementation of the Convention in the area of preparedness and response. It provided an overview about its national policy in the area of biosafety and biosecurity and the respective legal framework in place. Additionally, it shared the steps taken in the context of the national preparedness programme and outlined areas of assistance required. The second technical presentation focussed on a capacity-building project that is part of a wider multi-annual biosafety and biosecurity initiative for an entire region. In particular, further information on the establishment and deployment of mobile lab teams was provided. Several States Parties welcomed the State Party's work and emphasized the importance of international collaboration. Other States Parties also presented their national and international capacity-building efforts.

21. Furthermore, one international organization also informed about its efforts to develop a biological incidents analysis platform. It builds upon an established global data repository focused on biological incidents and aims to offer a tracking tool and early warning system for natural, accidental and deliberate biological threats and incidents for the law enforcement community worldwide. Similarly, information was shared about an initiative to address agro-crime and agro-terrorism matters that is carried out in close collaboration with other relevant international organization.

VI. Agenda item 9 - Exploration of means to prepare for, respond to and render assistance in case of the possible hostile use of biological agents and toxins against agriculture, livestock as well as the natural environment

22. Under this agenda item, one State Party introduced a working paper which described lessons learned in international cooperation and assistance from an agricultural incident. Several States Parties welcomed the presentation, with some raising additional questions. These revolved around customs control mechanisms, current e-commerce regulations and assessments concerning bio- and sanitary safety. Additionally, some delegations informed

about similar incidents and other relevant threat scenarios in their countries. Moreover, suggestions were made for mitigating those threats including through an offer on regional cooperation.

23. In the ensuing discussions, various delegations stressed the need to strengthen preparedness and response capacities concerning the hostile use of biological agents and toxins against agriculture, livestock and the natural environment. In this regard, the criticality of strengthening national capacities was stressed. At the same time, the importance of international cooperation and enhancement of existing capabilities was highlighted. Additionally, it was suggested to foster a permanent dialogue between the BWC and other international organizations, such as the WHO, FAO, OIE, Interpol and other relevant actors. Several States Parties urged that more attention should be paid to this topic in any future intersessional process and they suggested to agree upon appropriate language at the upcoming Ninth Review Conference.

Annex II

List of documents of the 2020 Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/1	Provisional Agenda for the 2020 Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness - Submitted by the Chairperson
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/2	Report of the 2020 Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/CRP.1 English only	Draft Report of the 2020 Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness – Submitted by the Chairperson
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/MISC.1 English/French/Spanish only	Provisional list of participants
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/INF.1 English/French/Spanish only	List of participants
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/WP.1 English only	Strengthening National, Sub-Regional and International Capacities to Prepare for and Respond to the Deliberate Use of Biological Weapons: Project update – Submitted by Japan
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/WP.2 English and Russian only	Strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention Operationalising mobile biomedical units to deliver protection against biological weapons, investigate their alleged use, and to suppress epidemics of various etiology – Submitted by the Russian Federation
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/WP.3 English and French only	Proposal for the establishment of a database for assistance under Article VII of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention: specific pending issues and way forward for the operationalization of the proposal – Submitted by India and France
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/WP.3/Corr.1 French only	Proposal for the establishment of a database for assistance under Article VII of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention: specific pending issues and way forward for the operationalization of the proposal – Submitted by India and France
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/WP.4* English only	Lessons Learned in International Cooperation and Assistance from an Agricultural Incident – Submitted by the United States of America
BWC/MSP/2020/MX.4/WP.5 English only	Strengthening Capacities in Responding to and Preparing for the Deliberate Use of Biological Weapons: Lessons Learned from UNSGM Table Top Exercise 2020 and Outlook to the Capstone Field Exercise – Submitted by Germany