



INDIA भारत

**Permanent Mission of India
Conference on Disarmament**

Statement delivered by India at the 4th Session of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), Geneva, 23 August 2024.

Thank you, Chair for giving us the floor.

Chair,

The final document of the 9th Review Conference of BTWC agreed that the working group should recommend measures to strengthen the convention. These measures, it was noted in the final document, *“should be formulated and designed in a manner such that their implementation supports international cooperation efforts and avoids any negative impacts”*.

The 9th Review Conference also decided to *“develop with a view to establishing a mechanism to facilitate and support the full implementation of the international cooperation and assistance under Article X”*.

Chair,

India’s commitment to Article X of the convention remains consistent.

India has, both extended and benefitted from, the international cooperation and assistance efforts, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Effective implementation of Article X, in our delegation’s opinion, could bring equitable benefits for all States Parties, particularly for the developing countries facilitating the full and effective implementation of BTWC.

My delegation supports that States Parties should facilitate and have the right to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials, and scientific and technological information for peaceful purposes, consistent with Article X.

We also note that there are organic inter-linkages between Article III and Article X. International cooperation, under Article X, must be balanced with obligations under Article III.

Direct and indirect transfers relevant to the Convention therefore should be considered, when the intended use is for the purposes not prohibited under the Convention.

Chair,

India stands ready to work with fellow Member States to advance the establishment of the mechanism to facilitate and support the full implementation of the proposed international cooperation and assistance under the Convention.

India acknowledges that the non-paper produced by the Friends of the Chair on ICA, which has proposed an ICA mechanism consisting of an ICA Program, its Steering Group, and a Fund, serves as a useful paper for further discussions.

I would like to take the opportunity to briefly outline elements of our position on the possible mandate, modalities, structure, functions and financing of the mechanism: -

1. The proposed ICA mechanism should be inclusive. At the same time, it should be nimble to efficiently take its programmatic decisions. Interests of all States Parties, particularly developing countries, should be taken on board, consistent with the provisions of Article X.
2. The ICA mechanism should seek to foster complementarity with international cooperation efforts in relevant international organizations and should be consistent with BTWC's mandate.
3. To ensure inclusivity, all States Parties should ideally be able to participate in the deliberations of the ICA mechanism, express views on its operation and raise any relevant concerns, consistent with Article X. The Meeting of States Parties, it appears, may be the appropriate place to organize such open-ended deliberations.
4. The ICA Steering Group, which is proposed as a limited ended body, should supervise the programmatic activities. These decisions could be made open to review by open body, as suggested by Switzerland, through a silence procedure, if required. The Steering Group should have States Parties as its members, and its membership should reflect broad regional or geographical distribution.
5. The nature, extent and scope of assistance must be tailored to the needs of the requesting State Party. The decisions on the provision of assistance and funding should be made available on non-discriminatory basis.

6. The ISU should, if requested, provide guidance to States Parties to prepare project proposals for submission to Steering Group; and subsequently support monitoring of the project implementation.
7. With regard to funding of the mechanism, it is our understanding that the ICA mechanism should be firmly footed; the basic structure and meetings of the mechanism should be funded by assessed contributions. In addition, we support the strengthening of ISU with appropriate human resources to carry out envisaged tasks.
8. The number of meetings, both of steering group and otherwise, should therefore be judiciously allocated. The decision on the number of meetings of the Steering Group may be taken, as appropriate, by MSP in line with the requirements.
9. The ICA Fund, which will essentially fund the projects, should be made predictable and sustainable. The voluntary contributions by States to the trust fund could be calculated based on UN assessment rates. The target amount for the ICA fund may be decided by the Review Conference for the inter-sessional period.
10. We also positively acknowledge, as provided in the working paper, that setting some minimum percentage of cost contribution by the State Party that will receive assistance, could help promote sustainability and ensure national ownership. A provision however could be made to do away with this requirement in exceptional circumstances.
11. The ICA Steering Group, with the support of ISU, should also supervise the matchmaking of offers and requests in the Article X database.
12. The Review Conference could be tasked with overall oversight and review the ICA mechanism.

Chair,

India stands ready to engage constructively in discussions on the international cooperation and assistance under the BTWC.

We look forward to a productive and pragmatic outcome of the working group, including on the establishment of the ICA mechanism.
