

**Statement by Mr. Bedi Anmol Sher, Senior Adviser at the BIOLOGICAL
WEAPONS CONVENTION – 9TH REVIEW CONFERENCE on ARTICLE VII, 1st
December 2022, GENEVA**

Thank you, Madam Chair, for giving us the floor.

The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed a steep learning curve for policy-makers and practitioners all over the world. The importance of finding practical solutions to implement Article VII of the BWC, and to be ready and prepared, is evident.

The discussions during the Inter-Sessional period reflect a broad consensus that the implementation of Article VII needs to be strengthened. In this context, I would like to refer to the joint proposal by India & France on the establishment of a database for assistance.

The Article VII of the Convention is a provision for international solidarity, and it provides States Parties to request and receive assistance in case they have been exposed to danger as a result of a violation of the BWC's provisions. It, therefore, serves as an important incentive towards the universalization of the convention.

Madam Chair,

As you might recall, this is not a new proposal. The 8th RevCon supported the establishment of the database. It did not, however, provide a specific mandate for establishing it. It has therefore not yet been launched.

The establishment of a database for assistance attempts to address this requirement and identifies the gap between the 'need for' and the 'lack of' institutional and operative structure to give effect to Article VII.

The proposal essentially calls on the BWC ISU to establish, administer and maintain a database on a secure web-based platform to be hosted on the BWC ISU website. It will act as a clearing house tool for matching assistance requests and offers for assistance registered in the database, and will be open to all States Parties without exception.

BWC States Parties can benefit from assistance, as envisaged by Article VII under three main categories. First, non-monetary contributions, such as expertise and information sharing. Second - pre-exposure preparedness and capacity building, such as protection and detection including through - for instance pre-emptive training modules or population awareness and response. Third - post exposure response scenarios, namely decontamination, prophylactic or containment measures. Other fields can also be considered that could fit in well in the database, as long as they are fully relevant to the scope of the BWC.

Madam, Chair,

We understand that the database need not duplicate the efforts of databases already provided by other international organizations or bilateral arrangements. As brought out

by the distinguished representative from Iraq and Japan, a cross platform conversation among existing databases is acknowledged as necessary to optimize complementarities and needs to be factored in at operationalization phase with due consultations among States parties.

Given the financial situation of the Convention, the establishment of a voluntary trust fund under Article VII may also be considered, if agreed to by all States Parties.

Similar mechanisms for assistance databases exist in international organizations. In 2020, with the support of the BWC ISU, an analysis of lessons learned from assistance databases utilized in relevant international organizations was conducted to further develop and improve the Article VII database proposal. In addition, a series of three virtual workshops were also conducted from May to June 2021 to consult States Parties about the database proposal. The workshops were positively received and provided an opportunity to receive their views, expectations and technical inputs for implementing the proposal.

Madam Chair,

The Article VII Database proposal belongs to all of us. The benefits accruing from the database far exceed the costs.

It is our hope that the 9th Review Conference will decide to approve the creation of this database through adoption of an appropriate language, which has been shared by my colleague from France.

I, thank you, Madam Chair.