

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ANUPAM RAY at the BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION – 9TH REVIEW CONFERENCE, 28 NOVEMBER 2022, GENEVA

Let me begin by congratulating my dear colleague Ambassador Leonardo Bencini on assuming the presidency of the 9th Review Conference. We complement you and your team about the manner in which you have conducted the preparatory process.

We assure you of the full support of our delegation.

Mr. President,

The BWC, in its present form, faces a number of challenges about its ability to deal with emerging biosecurity threats. These have been highlighted by the COVID pandemic.

The timing of this review conference therefore assumes greater importance than usual.

We believe that this conference is an opportunity to take meaningful steps to strengthen the convention.

Mr. President,

India believes that the global norm against the use of biological weapons needs to be reinforced.

India also believes that the long-term sustainability of the Convention should be rooted in legally binding measures rather than through ad-hoc measures.

Mr. President,

Several concrete proposals have been put forth during the Meeting of Experts and States Parties. Some of these are in advanced stages and, if adopted, have the potential of strengthening the convention. They therefore merit serious consideration.

India urges commencement of negotiations on a comprehensive and legally binding protocol, which would provide for effective, universal and non-discriminatory verification mechanism.

The elements of such a legally binding protocol should take into account the specific requirements and challenges posed by biosciences and biotechnology.

In this context we have taken positive note of the proposal aimed at establishing a temporary working group for a more focused discussion on compliance related issues. We, however, believe that it should focus on verification and strengthening BWC structurally.

India believes that the establishment of a Scientific Review Mechanism is essential for institutional strengthening of the Convention. Such a mechanism would systematically

review the challenges posed by new and emerging scientific and technological developments. We would prefer the mechanism to be technical in nature and inclusive in composition.

We also feel that international cooperation under the Article X must be strengthened appropriately.

The convention must also develop a mechanism to actualize its provisions under Art VII on assistance, response and preparedness. The joint proposal by India and France offers a concrete blue print in terms of matching specific offers and requests for assistance. It will also act as a strong incentive towards universalisation of the convention. We request Member States to support the proposal.

We also need to situate the discussions and processes in the BWC within the larger context of discussions taking place in other international and transnational platforms organisations that directly relate to biosecurity and biosafety. Overlap should be avoided and synergies and complementarities explored.

We believe that CBMs have served as a useful transparency measure to build trust and confidence. The annual filing of CBMs has however been irregular. We also note that the information provided by states parties differs in details and precision. The exchange of data must be made more uniform.

The ISP, particularly the MSPs, needs to be strengthened. The authority of ISP to take and implement decisions needs to be reinforced.

The ISU has done excellent work over the years. It however lacks adequate resources - both financial and human. It faces growing demands and increasing expectations. We believe that the ISU needs to be strengthened and placed on a strong and sustainable footing by ensuring both stability and predictability in resources.

In conclusion, India stresses its commitment to the BWC and to its full and effective implementation. We are confident that under your able leadership, the Review Conference will adopt a strong and forward looking Final document by consensus.
