



## **Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations Geneva**

### **Statement by Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, Permanent Representative of Pakistan at the Ninth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) – 28 November 2022**

**Mr. President,**

I congratulate you on your election and commend you for steering the preparatory process.

We appreciate the professionalism and efficient work done by the ISU despite the modest resources at its disposal.

We welcome Namibia as a fellow BWC State Party.

We associate ourselves with the statement delivered by Azerbaijan on behalf of NAM.

**Mr. President,**

For the past five decades, the BWC regime has had a unique normative, operational and institutional character within the larger arms control architecture. In all three spheres, the progress made is noticeable.

Yet, fifty years after its inception, the BWC regime finds itself in a different setting which is increasingly shaped by major transformations in life sciences, technology and actors.

The fifty year milestone is therefore an important occasion to assess its continued relevance, efficacy and fitness to navigate as well as respond to the promise and perils in the decades ahead.

**Mr. President,**

The BWC regime represents a careful balance between its regulatory and promotional pillars. This balance needs to be maintained. Access to and use of life sciences and related technologies remain critical to the socio-economic well-being of developing countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the fragilities of the global public health architecture and its disproportionate impacts on developing countries. Apart from the intersecting issues of life sciences, viruses and infectious diseases, the pandemic highlighted how lack of access to and use of diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines led to loss of lives and livelihoods.

The pandemic is therefore yet another reminder to take a fresh look at the mutually reinforcing nature of promotional and regulatory dimensions of the BWC regime.

We share concerns over the possibility of acquisition, production and use of biological materials as well as technology by non-state actors and in some cases by states as well. We agree that sensitive technologies and materials should be adequately regulated to guard against their uses incompatible with the purposes of the BWC.

However, these concerns cannot justify control measures, which impede legitimate uses of biological sciences, equipment and technology among States Parties for demonstrably peaceful purposes.

Similarly, the potentially dual nature of emerging technologies in the life sciences should not be used as a pretext for proscribing or restricting their availability to developing countries. Striking a prudent balance between addressing new risks and keeping avenues of assistance and cooperation open remains vital.

**Mr. President,**

Pakistan remains committed to the full and effective implementation of the BWC regime. We continue to accord priority to universalization of the Convention, and enhanced implementation of all its articles in a balanced, non-discriminatory and comprehensive manner.

As a developing country with 220 million people, Pakistan attaches high importance to the development of life sciences and biotechnology. We continue to invest and deploy them as critical accelerators to socio-economic development.

We have a good institutional base, a sound infrastructure, and a pool of scientists to sustain this effort. We continue to enforce export controls and measures on bio-security, bio-safety, bio-ethics, dual-use education, and Code of Conduct for Life Scientists.

We also continue to work cooperatively with other States Parties to strengthen the BWC regime. We will continue to do so. We look forward to scaled up international exchange, collaboration and capacity building. Promotion and facilitation of access to technology, equipment, good practices for research and peaceful purposes in the fields of medicine, agriculture and industry remains a key priority.

**Mr. President,**

We recognize the importance of regularly reviewing science and technology related developments. We support the establishment of a States Parties-led, inclusive and representative mechanism that advances awareness about potential risks as well as helps enhance cooperation on sharing of new technologies for peaceful purposes.

In the absence of an institutional architecture, we acknowledge the significance of strengthening the Convention's preparedness, assistance and response arrangement. It remains imperative for affected States Parties to receive timely and adequate assistance.

We however reiterate that provision of such assistance should not be conditional on a determination by the UN Security Council with respect to the investigation of alleged use. Assistance should be provided promptly on the basis of request by the affected state.

We look forward to constructive engagement on how a mechanism can be developed where such requests can be attended to in a timely and effective manner.

**Mr. President,**

We view the CBMs as a useful interim tool for increasing transparency and building trust and confidence among States Parties. We also recognize the

complementary mechanism of the UNSG as an important operational tool for investigating complaints of alleged use.

However, we are of the view that neither the UNSG's mechanism nor the CBMs can substitute for assessing compliance by States Parties. The UNSG mechanism remains an operational tool for investigating an act after its occurrence.

Establishing a verification and compliance mechanism within the BWC can assure that biological and toxin weapons are never developed, produced, stockpiled or otherwise acquired or retained, thereby precluding their use by the States Parties.

We therefore reiterate the widely held view that the most effective method of strengthening the BWC is through the conclusion of a legally-binding Protocol that covers all its articles and includes a multilateral verification mechanism.

This Review Conference may establish an Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group to examine all proposals holistically and evolve a new organizational framework for the Convention that strengthens its promotional and regulatory role but also fills its verification and compliance gaps.

**Mr. President,**

Pakistan supports the Working Papers tabled by NAM.

Pakistan and China will submit a joint working paper on Tianjin Biosecurity guidelines for code of conduct for scientists. This voluntary model represents an important contribution and good practice.

We welcome the co-sponsorship by Brazil and Sri Lanka and look forward to additional co-sponsorships. We hope the Review Conference endorses it to pave the way for its wider dissemination and adherence.

My delegation will engage constructively with you and States Parties in securing a successful and forward looking outcome.

**I thank you.**