



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

**Statement by Pakistan at  
the Third Meeting of the Working Group on Strengthening of the  
Convention,  
Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)  
“Measures on compliance and verification”  
06 December 2023**

**Mr Chair,**

We deeply appreciate the efforts and consultations held by the Friends of Chair on this topic.

We are grateful for the presentations delivered by various organizations under this topic.

**Mr Chair,**

Among all the WMD categories treaties, BTWC stands out. It was the first multilateral instrument banning an entire category of WMDs. Yet, despite all subsequent instruments having recourse to verification provisions, the BTWC has so far not been able to implement the age old arms control and disarmament adage i.e. “trust but verify”.

This Working Group was set up by the 9<sup>th</sup> Review Conference to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the implementation of the Convention in all its aspects. This purpose is to be achieved through specific effective measures and recommendations, which will be negotiated in this Group.

We believe that the best way to strengthen this important Convention is by enhancing the implementation of all its articles in a balanced, non-discriminatory and comprehensive manner. The most effective method to do that is through the conclusion of legally-binding measures on verification.

The lack of verification provisions, coupled with suspicions of non-compliance and increasing concerns about the implications of certain scientific and technological advances, reinforces the need to seriously reconsider the resumption of negotiations on legally binding verification measures.

**Mr Chair,**

Many States Parties in this room are highlighting that the world has changed significantly from the time the BWC was first negotiated in 1972 and since 2001, when the Ad Hoc Group (AHG) considered the draft Protocol on the Convention.

Therefore, we see merit in the argument that there is a need to revisit and review the work conducted by our predecessors in the VEREX and later in Ad Hoc Group.

We believe that many of the verification measures agreed in the VEREX still remain relevant. The VEREX report drew an important conclusion, which remains valid today. And I quote, “While it was agreed that reliance could not be placed on any single measure to differentiate conclusively between prohibited and permitted activity and to resolve ambiguities about compliance, it was also agreed that the measures could provide information of varying utility in strengthening the BWC”. Unquote

In other words, these verification measures, when taken together, could be useful to varying degrees in enhancing confidence in compliance. We believe that the confidence level associated with the VEREX measures could be reviewed with the participation of scientific and technical experts.

As the working paper submitted by the Russian Federation also notes that a number of key provisions of the draft Protocol, including terminology, lists of biological agents and toxins, threshold quantities of biological materials and criteria for their inclusion in the lists, methodological approaches to compiling lists of equipment, conducting inspections and verifications, as well as investigations of possible violations of obligations under the BTWC, will require substantial revision.

At the same time, the technological evolution over the past decades has also given us new means and tools which could support verification provisions and supplement measures agreed by VEREX.

**Mr Chair,**

One question that we would all be expected to answer is, what do we want to verify? Do we aim to identify the presence of undeclared activities in a State at all times or would we want to identify unusual activities warranting

detailed attention and to build confidence in the compliance of the Convention. The answer to this question will inform the verification procedures.

One way of enhancing compliance with the Convention could be that the Working Group recommend consideration of additional measures for addressing compliance concerns regarding activities at facilities. This would include detailed procedures for when treaty implementing organization can conduct an on-site inspection at a facility in response to a specific concern lodged by a State Party. This is also argued by the US in its working paper.

However, we do believe that on-site inspections remain a useful component of any verification toolbox for a future mechanism, which should be employed not only in a scenario of concerns of non-compliance but also generally on a systematic basis by a treaty implementing organization to build trust. Of course, such inspections would only be one of the several verification provisions at the disposal of a treaty implementing organization.

**Mr Chair,**

As we had argued back in the Ad Hoc Group over two decades ago, all natural outbreaks of disease do not pose a compliance concern to the Convention and therefore shall not be a cause for an investigation of a non-compliance concern. An outbreak of disease which appears to be unusual, could be investigated.

We believe that any verification measures will not be static and will continue to evolve based on the changing bio landscape. And here the role of a future Science and Technology Review Mechanism will be of significance, as referred to many States Parties.

**Mr Chair,**

Our Working Group has an action-oriented mandate, which is consistently highlighted by many States Parties. While we are not negotiating a draft Protocol at this time, we still need to determine how to best utilize the 10 days allocated to this body on the issue of Verification and Compliance.

We believe that this period can be used to start examining the verification principles which we have considered in the past, their technological and scientific relevance and how much they can contribute to enhancing confidence in compliance.

In this vein, we would like to support the call made by China that States Parties may conduct technical assessment in 2025-2026 with the participation of

scientific and technical experts to discuss the basic principles of the verification mechanism.

In our recommendations of this working group, we would like to see a clear road-map for the future for negotiating legally-binding verification measures. In recognition of the scientific and technological progress, as well as evolving global challenges and realities of the past two decades, we believe that reviving the Ad Hoc Group on verification protocol could be a way forward.

Role of a treaty implementing organization would also be of paramount importance in any future verification mechanism. With this in mind, we see the proposal of Kazakhstan on IABS with great interest, which should warrant our serious consideration.

Admittedly, evolution of any verification mechanism, which would in turn also cater to the investigation of a possible breach, is a complex task owing to the unique nature of BWC. We also remain mindful of the high cost of any verification mechanism, but remain convinced that this could nevertheless be adequately addressed as part of the solutions we negotiate.

The risks of delaying consideration of verification mechanism far outweigh any costs. The Covid-19 pandemic is an illustration how one event could be extremely disruptive to public health, incur economic losses and lead to costs which are far higher than any cost for compliance under a verification mechanism. We remain convinced that cost of verification would only be a fraction of what we saw the world suffer in the past few years.

A protocol, containing legally binding verification measures, remains the best way to improve compliance with the Convention.

I thank you.