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Statement by Pakistan at the Meeting of States Parties (MSP) to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), 22 November 2021

Agenda Item 5: General Debate.

Mr. Chairman,

I congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the 2020 Meeting of State Parties (MSP) to the Biological Weapons Convention.

We thank you for your efforts in steering the organizational aspects of the MSP process in the midst of pandemic related challenges. We agree with you that our intercessional work remains organic, from 2019 till now and indeed to the Ninth Review Conference.

I assure you of my delegation's full support in reaching substantive outcomes from this meeting.

We also recognize the efforts made by chairs of the meetings of experts (MXs) and thank them for their work.

The ISU has continued to discharge its duties ably and efficiently professionally despite the modest resources at its disposal. We commend the ISU staff for its professionalism.

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

Mr. Chairman,

Within the larger arms control architecture, the BWC regime remains distinct even after five decades of its inception. It has registered progress in terms of strengthening of norms. Its organizational and institutional arrangements have

evolved. Yet, there is sufficient room to fully realize the potential of this Convention in its protection and promotional aspects.

As the 50th anniversary of the Convention coincides with the 9th Review Conference next year, it may be worthwhile to not only take stock of the progress made and challenges encountered, but also chart a vibrant roadmap for the next fifty years of the BWC regime.

Together with other emerging technologies, the life sciences will also witness a range of complex, potentially dangerous but also promising developments in the decades ahead. The BWC regime will therefore need to be enabled to prepare for and respond to future opportunities and challenges.

Mr. Chairman,

Apart from its devastating economic and social impacts, the COVID-19 pandemic has also laid bare the fragilities of the global public health architecture including the intersecting issues of life sciences, viruses, infectious diseases, and the state of readiness in terms of diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines.

The pandemic has also highlighted the need for deeper reflection on the mutually reinforcing nature of the prevention and protection aspects of the BWC as well as the critical role of meaningful operationalization of international assistance and cooperation in the field of life sciences.

The importance of strengthening the BWC regime and enhancing its effective and balanced implementation is ever more obvious. The unprecedented human cost directly attributable to the COVID pandemic is yet another reminder for accelerated collaboration, exchanges and cooperation and to move beyond deliberations to deliverables.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan remains committed to the full, effective and balanced implementation of the BWC. We share concerns over the potential use of life sciences for purposes inconsistent with the BWC. 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.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan and China have submitted a joint working paper on Tianjin Biosecurity guidelines for code of conduct for scientists. This voluntary model is

aimed at making an important contribution to raising biosafety and biosecurity awareness and enhancing ethical self-discipline among biological researchers.

It is our sincere hope that the 9th Review Conference would endorse it and task the subsequent intersessional process to exchange information experiences and good practices on its dissemination and adoption.

We also recognize the importance of regularly reviewing science and technology related developments. We support the establishment of a States Parties-led, inclusive and representative mechanism. It should not only increase awareness about potential risks, but also help enhance cooperation on sharing of new technologies for peaceful purposes.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the years, Pakistan has worked cooperatively with other States Parties to strengthen the BWC regime in ways that promote and facilitate sharing of biological technology, equipment, good practices for research and peaceful purposes in the fields of medicine, agriculture and industry.

Pakistan is investing in the development of life sciences and biotechnology for its socio-economic development. We have a good institutional base, a sound infrastructure, and a pool of scientists to sustain this effort. We have enforced stringent measures on bio-security, bio-safety, bio-ethics, dual-use education, export controls and Code of Conduct for Life Scientists. These measures should elicit greater international exchange, collaboration and cooperation. On our part, we are willing to share our experiences and help in our own modest ways in terms of capacity building of other interested States Parties.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, it remains my delegation's hope that our discussions will augment those from the intersessional process and contribute meaningfully towards concrete deliverables, particularly with an eye towards the ninth BWC Review Conference next year.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.
