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**Statement by Pakistan at the Meeting of States Parties (MSP) to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), 24 November 2021**

**Agenda Item 6:** *Consideration of the factual reports of the Meetings of Experts reflecting their deliberations, including possible outcomes:*

*(e) Meeting of Experts on Institutional Strengthening of the Convention.*

**Mr. Chairman,**

Pakistan associates itself with the statement delivered by Azerbaijan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and has a few additional comments under this agenda item.

We welcome the work carried out in MX-5 this year under the guidance of Ms. Griselle Rodriguez Ramirez of Panama. We take note of the Report contained in document BWC/MSP/2020/MX.5/2, including the Annex prepared by the Chairperson, under her own responsibility, summarizing the discussions.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The BWC is the first multilateral disarmament treaty banning an entire category of weapons of destruction is built on two core goals. The first is to completely outlaw the development production, stockpiling, or otherwise retaining or acquiring biological weapons and their means of delivery. In this regard, the convention has built a robust international norm against the repugnant motion of using disease, toxins or pathogens as a means of warfare. Although membership of the BWC is not yet universal. No state openly claims today that biological weapons are a legitimate means of national defense. We deeply value the BWC's contribution as a vital pillar of the global security regime.

The second core aspect of the convention is promotional. The notion of international cooperation and assistance also lies at the heart of the BWC regime. We attach high importance to article X of the convention concerning transfer of knowledge and technology for peaceful uses of biology.

Despite the notable achievements of the BWC regime, progress on the two core priorities of the convention has not been even nor has it been commensurate with the expectation of the international community at large. The Convention continues to be challenged by the absence of an institutional mechanism not only on compliance and verification, but also on response and assistance in cases deliberate use and on international cooperation and peaceful uses. Paksitan supports the institutional strengthening of this important convention by enhancing the implementation of all its articles in a balanced non-discriminatory and comprehensible manner. We are of the view that the most effective method of strengthening the BWC is through the conclusion of the legally binding Protocol that covers all the articles of the Convention and includes a multilateral verification.

In this regard, the body of valuable work carried out by the ad hoc group already exists which should serve as the basis for further progress in this overly ripe and vital area of a verification protocol to the BWC.

Mr. Chairman,

Compliance is the gold standard of arms control agreements. The BWC regime however continues to witness a major gap in ensuring compliance of states parties with the provisions of the Convention. Given the increasing concerns about the risks of use of certain scientific and technological advances for purposes incompatible with the convention, and on which experts in the field academia, and scientific community have clearly pronounced add to the urgency of progress in this vital area.

These developments reinforce the need to seriously reconsider the resumption of negotiations on a legally binding, verification protocol. Such an institutional mechanism is fundamental to the enduring success of the convention in upholding, the collectively evolved norm that advances in life sciences biology and biotechnology are used only for the benefit of humanity and never as a weapon. While Pakistan views CBMs as a useful tool for increasing transparency and building trust as well as confidence among states parties. Such tools cannot be a means for assessing compliance by States parties. For which the only method is, as I said, a multilaterally negotiated legally binding mechanism with verification provisions.

Lastly, Mr. chair, let me note that Pakistan is a state party that has always met all its financial obligations under the convention in full and is pleased with the measures that have been put in place during this intercession period to address the financial challenges faced by the BWC in a sustainable manner.

**I thank you, Mr. Chairman.**