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**Meeting of Experts to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development,  
Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons  
and on Their Destruction, Geneva, 10-14 August 2015**

**Statement On behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and  
Other  
States Parties to the BWC**

**On  
S&T Developments  
12 August 2015**

**Mr. Chairman,**

NAM and Other States Parties welcome the discussions on S&T developments as part of a standing agenda of the current inter-sessional program, as the review of S&T developments is mandated by Article XII of the BWC.

NAM and Other States Parties to the BWC recall that at the Seventh Review Conference we expressed our view that there may be benefit in reviewing S&T developments in a regular and systematic manner and that such review could be carried through an agenda item in the current inter-sessional program.

NAM and Other States Parties believe that the rapid pace of developments in biological science and technology has implications for the implementation of the BWC, both in terms of S&T advances which can be used for purposes contrary to the objectives of the Convention and S&T advances which could be of special relevance for the implementation of the Convention as well as for assistance and



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cooperation to the developing countries. The discussions under this agenda item have the potential to enhance scientific understanding and knowledge sharing among States Parties.

Advances in enabling technologies like bioinformatics; computational biology; DNA microarrays; gene synthesis technology; high-throughput mass spectrometry; high-throughput sequencing; nanotechnology; synthetic biology; systems biology; and whole-genome directed evolution are critical for future life sciences research and development. These enabling technologies have many benefits in faster, cheaper, and easier application of biological science and technology for both public health and security purposes, increased capacity and better understanding of disease and healthcare technologies by more people in more locations throughout the world.

Furthermore new science and technology developments have many potential benefits for the Convention in improved health care, increasing capacity to diagnose and treat diseases, more efficient food production, more renewable energy resources and better pollution management. In this regard, the Group stresses the importance of the adoption of a plan for active and fullest exchange of knowledge and technology in areas related to enabling and new technologies between developed and developing countries to ensure the unhindered flow of scientific information and technology.

There should be no hindrance to the peaceful activities of States Parties, such as vaccine development, medicines and diagnostic equipment, which are essential for developing countries for meeting their public health needs. There is need for equitable benefits from international cooperation in this area, keeping in mind the need for



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ensuring appropriate and affordable support for developing countries. The recent Ebola outbreak in West Africa signifies the fact that any disruption of immunization services, even for short periods would risk the increase of the likelihood of vaccine preventable disease outbreaks. This means that States Parties must scale-up routine and urgent immunization activities. Therefore, we also are of the view that the developing countries need to meet their needs for cost-effective, affordable and quality assured medicines and vaccines including through provisions such as compulsory licensing or price controls.

NAM notes that there have been recent advances demonstrating the increasing sophistication of synthetic biology, together with other enabling technologies, which have benefits, together with the potential for uses contrary to the provisions of the Convention. All states must conduct such activities in a transparent manner, in order to build the confidence of other States Parties. There is a need to regulate these activities, to ensure that they do not lead to any concerns related to ethics, safety and security as well as any uses contrary to the Convention.

This has assumed added importance in the light of reports concerning experiments that have been taking place on highly contagious virulent flu strains like H5N1, as well as the production of several new strains of viruses that are both contagious and deadlier than the 1918 Spanish flu that killed almost 50 million people, and the discovery of the deadly smallpox variola virus dating back to the 1950s. Such regulation must, however, be undertaken in a manner that does not hamper scientific and technological developments that are in keeping with the spirit and letter of the Convention, which are of benefit, more especially to developing countries. These recent developments once



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again highlight the need to conclude a legally binding agreement on appropriate multilateral verification arrangements. In the past, useful work has been done in this regard under the BWC in the Ad-hoc Group and NAM continues to attach high importance to preserving and eventually resuming that work.

Concerning the dual use nature of some of the new technologies, the Group is aware that there is a potential for uses contrary to the provisions of the Convention including by programming cells to produce toxins, viruses or other cells which could cause harm, designing and building new or altered pathogenic viruses, the ability to confer mammalian transmissibility to viruses or drug resistance to pathogens, the decreasing genetic diversity and the development of incapacitating weapons and the increasing capacity to deliver biological weapons via the alimentary route. The Group reiterates its position that the dual use nature of these technologies by itself should not in anyway hamper the free and fullest exchange of technologies between the parties to the Convention especially when some developed countries are freely engaged in many activities that rest in the domain of these new technologies in the framework of their bio-defence programs.

States Parties should undertake all efforts to prevent actions and decisions within the BWC that would raise obstacles to the development of biological sciences in developing countries. The need to prevent harmful activities should never hamper scientific evolution for peaceful purposes and life-saving achievements like vaccine development. Developing countries, in particular, could benefit from advances in technologies that make vaccine production simpler, faster, cheaper and more efficient.



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The rapid development of science and technology has created significant opportunities for international cooperation to narrow the increasing gaps persisting in the fields of biotechnology, genetic engineering, microbiology and other related disciplines between developed and developing countries. NAM highlights the importance of continued deliberations within the standing agenda item on S&T to promote common understanding and effective actions which would help states parties to benefit from these developments.

The Group would like to reiterate some perspectives on the issues of biosafety and biosecurity and codes of conduct which are part of the discussions this year in the agenda items on S&T review and national implementation.

- First, the Group notes that both these issues were discussed in the last inter-sessional process as well as the Seventh Review Conference.
- Second, there is no commonly agreed definition of biosafety and biosecurity in the Convention. We strongly believe that the relevant national authorities should have the responsibility in defining and implementing such concepts, in accordance with relevant national laws, regulation and policies, consistent with the provisions of the Convention. The adoption of decisions and recommendations on this issue within the framework of the BWC belongs exclusively to the States Parties of the Convention.
- Third, achieving necessary standards in the fields of biosafety and biosecurity requires capacity building, and is facilitated by,



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international cooperation and through full and effective implementation of Article X of the Convention.

- Fourth, the Codes of Conduct remain the prerogative of the States Parties to decide on the development, content, promulgation and adoption of the code in accordance with relevant national laws, regulations and policies, consistent with the provisions of the Convention.
- Fifth, Codes of Conduct should avoid any restrictions on exchange of scientific discoveries in the field of biology for prevention of disease and other peaceful purposes. Subjecting scientific research and the free flow of scientific information to undue restrictions may amount to a violation of obligations undertaken under Article X of the BWC.

NAM and Other States Parties believe that enhancing scientific and technological understanding through this agenda item will be inadequate if ways and means are not found for technology transfers by the developed countries to developing ones. The unhindered exchange of science and technology in the framework of the Convention is also important in the context of enhanced national implementation of the Convention by developing countries which in many circumstances lack resources- technological, financial and human – required for the effective implementation of all provisions of the Convention.

Thank you.