Statement delivered by Ambassador (Dr.) Pankaj Sharma, Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament during the Meeting of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention in Geneva on November 22, 2021.

Mr. Chair

India congratulates you on the assumption of the Chair of the 2020 MSP of the BWC. We also place on record our sincere appreciation for the work of the BWC ISU. India associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the NAM.

2. India attaches high importance to the BWC, which is the first non-discriminatory disarmament treaty banning a complete category of weapons of mass destruction.

3. The Ninth Review Conference of the Convention next year presents a timely and significant opportunity to review the functioning of the Convention, not only in terms of fulfilment by States parties of their obligations, but also to agree on measures to further strengthen the Convention. We are pleased that the Inter Sessional Programme for this Review Cycle has facilitated useful discussions, including at the recent Meeting of Experts.

Mr. Chair

4. India accords high priority to the universalisation of the Convention and its full and effective implementation. A strong and stable ISU is an absolute must, as we intensify our work under the Convention, and requires further strengthening.

5. India reiterates its call for institutional strengthening of the Convention, including negotiation of a comprehensive and legally binding Protocol, providing for an effective, universal and non-discriminatory verification mechanism to strengthen the implementation of the Convention by States Parties. While CBMs may increase trust among States Parties by enhancing transparency, they are not a substitute for an effective mechanism for verification and compliance.

6. Art X is one of the key provisions of the BWC. Equitable benefits for States Parties, in particular developing countries, resulting from effective implementation of Article X, will also help in realizing universal adherence to the Convention and contribute to full and effective implementation of the Convention.

7. As regards Article VII, the joint India-France proposal on the Establishment of a Database for Assistance aims to provide a blueprint and a concrete pathway to bridge the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of Assistance, Response and Preparedness. India and France have conducted a series
of informal consultations including interactive sessions and technical workshops during the inter-sessional period, to develop an inclusive proposal and hope that a decision to establish an Art VII database can be adopted by the Ninth Review Conference.

Mr. Chair,

8. India strongly believes that the BWC must respond effectively to the challenges posed by the new and emerging scientific and technological developments of relevance to the Convention. India has been submitting an annual Resolution at the UNGA on the "Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament", which is adopted by consensus. Reaching a common understanding on a framework and criteria for assessing benefits and potential risks of the new and emerging technologies to the Convention is important. In this context, a Scientific Review Mechanism for the Convention is long overdue.

9. My delegation shares the widely held view among States Parties on the need for the Convention to be placed on a firm and sustainable financial footing. India has always met all its financial obligations under the Convention on time. India maintains that the BWC Working Capital Fund, agreed to by the 2018 MSP as an interim financial measure, must be funded through assessed contributions by States Parties and not through voluntary contributions. Furthermore, India maintains that the budget of BWC must be supported through contributions by States Parties and not by non-State entities.

Mr. Chair,

10. India looks forward to a fruitful Meeting of State Parties, under your able leadership and guidance and pledges its full support and cooperation. The full version of this statement will be made available on the BWC Portal.

Thank you.

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