Mr. Chair,

To say that we live in a time of incredible advances across all sciences has become a worn-out cliché, and I prefer not to relax in the comfort of cliches. But with the advances in biology that are already coming on the horizon, humanity has the potential to do things that have not been possible in the four and half billion years of our planet.

When converged with advances in other areas – such as Artificial Intelligence, 3-D Printing and Robotics, to name just a few – unprecedented opportunities open, to both further the Convention’s aims, but also to significantly undermine them.

This is why my delegation’s intervention on a Science and Technology Review Mechanism could have been in other articles – including potentially article X, since this mechanism must keep in mind scientific and technological cooperation for peaceful purposes – we are doing so under Article XII, which stipulates a review process that “take[s] into account any new scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention.”

BTWC States Parties have emphasized over the years the strong benefits of an S&T review mechanism within the framework of the Convention, with a broad convergence of views concerning all but a few features of such a process. These areas of convergence include: need for geographical diversity; inclusivity; effectiveness and practicality; a broad range of scientific expertise; independence from political influence; and adequate resources. Divergences exist on a few matters, but there are strong indications that finding common understanding on those with a committed focus is within reach as well.

My delegation’s intervention here draws on the work of many delegations that have submitted WPs, including the Russian Federation, the United States, China,
Germany, Japan, Switzerland, Iran, and many others. These efforts are systematically captured in the 2020 MX2 Chair’s comprehensive summary record. An open survey conducted by UNIDIR last year confirms that there is broad support for such a process. In short, there is nothing original in this intervention, other than pointing to the many similarities that we believe exist.

In this regard, establishing a Terms of Reference as part of a Review Conference decision could give clarity about the organization and implementation of the review process. Such an effort may include details on such elements as: mandate; structure and composition; rules of procedure; provisions for ensuring independence; resources; and similar practical aspects.

**The mandate** for such a process may be, at a minimum: to monitor, assess, and report on scientific and technological developments related to the Convention and how they may impact on the implementation of the Convention; and to assist States Parties’ decision-making by providing them with scientific and technological advice.

The advisory process should consider only scientific and technical issues of interest to States Parties, avoiding political issues. It should prepare a broad study of the implication of advances in science and technology for the Convention for each Review Conference. Other specific issues for study would be agreed by the annual Meeting of States Parties. Topics could be proposed by the advisory body itself or by States Parties.

The outputs of a potential new process would add value with reports to the States Parties that objectively reflect expert discussions, including different views; provide scientifically-grounded analyses and conclusions; and forward recommendations.

**On Structure and Composition**, over the years, States Parties have discussed several different proposed approaches for establishing an S&T review process. A key divergence has been between calls for broader inclusion and participation and, alternatively, for a more focused process. These two approaches need not exclude each other. There is increasing interest in a hybrid approach to composition that would strike a balance between inclusivity and practicality.
Efforts to seek a compromise approach ahead of the Review Conference should focus on a hybrid approach that has both an open-ended group and a limited group.

Both the open-ended and the limited groups should strive for relevant technical expertise and a broad range of technical specialties, as well as adequate geographic diversity, gender balance and political independence. Only citizens of States Parties should be eligible to be members of the open-ended or limited groups, or of any temporary working groups that might be established.

The open-ended group would be aimed at ensuring the inclusive character of the overall review process. Experts from all States Parties should be able to participate in the deliberations of the open-ended group. The open-ended group would consider the agenda items and provide their findings as “food for thought” for the limited group.

On the basis of the discussions in the open-ended group, the limited group may consider the same agenda items and prepare a consensus report to the States Parties with conclusions and recommendations. The number and length of term should be negotiated to find what is optimal, which is to say, what can garner consensus.

Members of the limited group should be drawn from regional groups, ensuring geographical diversity and gender balance. Their appointment should be based on their demonstrated expertise in particular scientific fields relevant to the implementation of the Convention. Such persons should be selected based on their qualifications and experience, taking into account their publications, scientific, academic or professional activities and distinctions with due regard to the area of specialty.

States Parties should also be able to establish temporary working groups to provide recommendations on a specific scientific and technological issue relevant to the Convention that requires in-depth study and participation by outside experts. The Chairs of the open-ended and limited groups, after consulting with their respective groups, may propose to States Parties to establish such a temporary working group. Each temporary working group should be chaired by a member of the open-ended or limited group appointed for that purpose.
The mechanism should, as a first order of business following a RevCon decision to set it up, **develop its Rules of Procedure**. These Rules should, at a minimum, have the following elements: Mode of Operation; Observers; ISU Support; Languages; and, Reports.

Maintaining the **independence** of the advisory process from political influence is essential for its credibility and long-term value.

Providing adequate **financial and personnel resources** for reviewing S&T developments that could affect the implementation of the Convention is an essential part of the adoption of an S&T review mechanism. Increased funding would be required both for meetings and for staff support.

The open-ended group and the limited group should each hold at least one in-person meeting per year. To ensure adequate staff support, a new technically-trained, expert staff member would need to be added to the ISU, together with an International Cooperation Officer.

* * * * * * * * * *

At the end, Mr. Chair, I am impelled to emphasise that on this issue, as on several others, there is a convergence. In these days, we need to continue reminding ourselves of such convergences – including in the context of this article the Tianjin Guidelines for Model Codes of Conduct – which, together with the urgency we should feel around holding a Review Conference for this incredibly important Convention, should give us some optimism that we can, not only have a Review Conference, but indeed, have a successful one, with several substantive outcomes that strengthen our Convention.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.