Mr Vice Chair,

Thank you for giving us the floor.

The discussions during the Inter-Sessional period and the remarks today and yesterday reflect a broad consensus amongst BWC States Parties that the implementation of Article VII needs to be strengthened.

In this context, I would like to refer to the joint proposal by India and France on the establishment of a database for assistance in the framework of Article VII.

Article VII is a provision for international solidarity, providing for States Parties to request and receive assistance in case they have been exposed to danger as a result of a violation of the BWC’s provisions.

It, therefore, serves as an important incentive towards the universalization of the convention.

As you might recall, this is not a new proposal. It dates back to the discussions in the 8th RevCon in 2016. The 8th RevCon supported the establishment of the database. It did not, however, provide a specific mandate for establishing it. It has therefore not yet been launched.

Mr Vice Chair,

The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed a steep learning curve for policy-makers and practitioners all over the world. The importance of finding practical solutions to implement Article VII of the BTWC, and to be ready and prepared, is evident. The proposal for establishment of a database for assistance under Article VII attempts to address this requirement and identifies the gap between the need for and the lack of institutional and operative structures to give effect to Article VII. It provides a possible blueprint on a way to bridge the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of assistance, response and preparedness.

The proposal calls on the BWC ISU to establish, administer and maintain a database on a secure web-based platform to be hosted on the BWC ISU website. It will be open to all States Parties and allow matching of specific offers and requests for assistance. It will respond to the need for developing effective measures and to also coordinate with relevant international organizations. BWC States Parties can benefit from assistance, as envisaged by Article VII, *inter alia* in the form of emergency assistance, containment measures and recovery assistance, through information exchange, capacity building, etc.

Given the financial situation of the Convention, the establishment of a voluntary trust fund under Article VII may also be considered, if agreed to by all States Parties.
Similar mechanisms for assistance databases exist in international organizations. In 2020, with the support of the BWC ISU, an analysis of lessons learned from assistance databases utilized in relevant international organizations was conducted to further develop and improve the Article VII database proposal. A series of three virtual workshops were also conducted last year to consult States Parties about the proposal. The workshops were positively received by States Parties and provided an excellent opportunity to receive their views, expectations and technical inputs for implementing the proposal.

Mr Vice Chair,

The Article VII Database proposal belongs to all of us. Each State party can make its own contribution, if it so desires, to this proposal.

It is our hope that the 9th Review Conference will decide to approve the creation of this database.

We hope that discussions in the Preparatory Committee will contribute towards the development of the proposal and a decision to adopt it.

The benefits accruing from the database far exceed the costs.

We thank those delegations who have conveyed their views on this proposal. We would like to hear from other delegations about this Database.

Thank you.

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