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Meeting of Experts of the Convention on the

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

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

**by H.E. Mr. Mohsen Naziri Asl, Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Geneva**

Geneva, 10 August 2015

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the States Parties of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and other States Parties to the Convention. NAM congratulates you, Ambassador Mazlan Muhammad, on your election as the Chairman of the BWC Meeting of States Parties for 2015. We are confident that with your diplomatic skills and ability we will be able to take forward the work of the Convention. The Group stands ready to engage constructively with you and other States Parties to bring this meeting of *Experts* to a successful conclusion.

The Group would like to re-emphasize its position as reflected in the



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Tehran final document of the NAM Summit, as reiterated by the NAM XVII Ministerial Conference held on 26 -29 May 2014 , Algiers, Algeria in which:

The Ministers of NAM States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) reaffirmed that the possibility of any use of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins as weapons should be completely excluded, and the conviction that such use would be repugnant to the conscience of humankind. They recognized the particular importance of strengthening the Convention through multilateral negotiations for a legally binding Protocol and universal adherence to the Convention. They reiterated their call to promote international cooperation for peaceful purposes, including scientific-technical exchange. They underlined the importance to maintain close coordination among the NAM States Parties to the Convention and highlighted that the BTWC forms a whole and that, although it is possible to consider certain aspects separately, it is critical to deal with all of the issues interrelated to this Convention in a balanced and comprehensive manner.

The Ministers of NAM States Parties to the BTWC welcomed the active participation by NAM States Parties in the Seventh BTWC Review Conference held in Switzerland from 5-22 December 2011, to advance their positions on this Convention, particularly their key role in the adoption of the important decisions related to the implementation of Article X of the BTWC, especially by emphasizing the need for enhancing international cooperation, assistance and exchanges in toxins, biological agents equipment and technology for peaceful purposes, bearing in mind the Action Plan on the implementation of Article

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X submitted by the NAM States Parties at the Sixth Review Conference, and the additional NAM States Parties' proposal on a mechanism for the full, implementation of Article X of the Convention presented more recently. They further encouraged the BTWC States Parties to implement the Article X, as set forth in paragraphs 50-61 of the Final Document of the seventh BTWC Review Conference. They also welcomed the outcome of the Seventh Review Conference and in particular its decision to include cooperation and assistance as one of the Standing Agenda Items, with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation and assistance under Article X, as well as the Conference's decision to establish a database system to facilitate requests for and offers of exchange of assistance and cooperation among States Parties, and the establishment of a Sponsorship Programme, funded by voluntary contributions from States Parties, in order to support and increase the participation of developing States Parties in the meetings of the inter-sessional programme in the framework of the BTWC.

The Ministers of NAM States Parties to the BTWC emphasized the importance of the BTWC role in the total prohibition on all biological and toxin weapons. They reiterated that multilateral negotiations aimed at concluding a non-discriminatory legally binding agreement, dealing with all Articles of the Convention, in a balanced and comprehensive manner, would sustainably strengthen the Convention. They reaffirmed that the respective mandates of this Convention and other international organizations should be respected, while utilizing the experiences of the relevant multilateral organizations dealing with human and animal health on issues that are of direct relevance to the



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Convention, and that no actions should be taken to undermine the Convention and/or interfere with its mandate.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of NAM and Other States Parties to the BWC attaches great importance to the issue of international cooperation as the first priority of the Group. In this context, we welcome the decision of the 7th Review Conference to include cooperation and assistance as one of the standing agenda items, with a particular focus on strengthening Article X implementation. However, we continue to believe that there is need for an effective mechanism to ensure the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article X. In this regard, the Group submitted a Working Paper on measures for full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article X on 2013. We are sure that this working paper contributes to the promotion of common understandings and effective action by the inter-sessional Program in 2015 and beyond, if its elements would be further considered. The enhancement of international cooperation for the use of biological agents for peaceful purposes is an essential part of compliance with the Convention and is crucial for the realization of the purpose and objective of the Convention.

We recognize the importance of the BWC and its role in the total ban on all biological and toxin weapons. The Group re-emphasizes that multilateral negotiations aimed at concluding a non-discriminatory, legally binding agreement, dealing with all Articles of the Convention, in a balanced and comprehensive manner, would sustainably strengthen the Convention.

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In this context, we believe that the respective mandates of this Convention and other international organizations should be respected, while utilizing the experiences of the relevant multilateral organizations dealing with human and animal health on issues that are of direct relevance to the Convention. In this regard, no actions should be taken to undermine the Convention and/or interfere with its mandate.

There should be no hindrance to peaceful activities, such as vaccine development, which are important 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 ensuring appropriate and affordable support for developing countries. 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 which may include the consideration of provisions such as compulsory licensing or price controls amongst others.

Any measures identified within the framework of the Convention to mitigate biological risks should be implemented in a manner to ensure that legitimate peaceful activities including international cooperation would not be hampered.

Mr. Chairman,

While the Group recalls its position on proposals related to compliance assessments, it reiterates that such proposals should not distract the attention of States Parties away from strengthening the Convention in all its aspects

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including the need for a verification mechanism. Effective international action against biological threats needs to be universal, legally binding, and non-discriminatory. In addition, this cannot be achieved without strengthening national capacity.

We also believe that 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. Imposing and/or maintaining unjustified restrictions contrary to the obligations under the Convention on the development of dual-use technology, materials and equipment needed to promote capacity building in the fields of sanitary control, detection, diagnosis and control of infectious diseases, including the production of some vaccines and other biological materials, should be considered a violation of Article X.

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

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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 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.

NAM stresses that the national implementation under Article IV of the Convention requires commitments towards the implementation of all provisions of the Convention. In this regard, NAM is of the firm view that the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article X is of high importance.

It is imperative that any export control measures adopted by States Parties at a national level should be in full conformity with Convention obligations and create an environment conducive to the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of all Convention provisions, and should not in any way adversely affect the rights and obligations of States Parties under the

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Convention. Non-proliferation efforts through maintaining export controls are best addressed through multilaterally, non-discriminatory negotiated guidelines to preserve the integrity and the delicate balance that exists in the Convention.

It is crucial to note that the Convention has established a system with equal rights and obligations based on the principle of equal treatment of all States Parties. Therefore, national implementation measures should not create undue restrictions among States Parties which would hinder the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article X.

NAM reiterates its support for the recommendation of the 7th Review Conference on Article VII. In this regard, it reaffirms that providing and/or supporting timely assistance in accordance with Article VII is a legal obligation of States Parties. While noting that States Parties' national preparedness contributes to international capabilities for response, investigation and mitigation of outbreaks of disease, NAM reaffirms that this should not be imposed as a precondition for either provision or receipt of assistance. To this end, a detailed procedure and mechanism for a timely, effective and adequate response needs to be developed. NAM further believes that the lack of a comprehensive Protocol to strengthen implementation of all aspects of the Convention has created a gap in the provision of prompt and effective assistance under Article VII to States Parties to the BWC. NAM expresses solidarity with the countries of West Africa- Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea affected by the outbreak of the Ebola virus- which though not a BW event, may offer important lessons for strengthening the BWC.



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We are also of the view that the universality of the Convention is of high priority and importance and therefore practical steps should be taken to achieve this goal. NAM welcomes the recent ratification of BTWC by Myanmar and accession of Mauritania and Andorra to the Convention. In this context, we emphasize the need for States that are not signatories to the Convention to display political will by joining the BWC. We call upon non-parties particularly those with advanced biotechnology to accede to the Convention without further delay.

Mr. Chairman,

I will elaborate the positions of the Group regarding the standing agenda items as well as the biennial topics later on this week. At this stage I would like to emphasize that maintaining the delicate balance reached in the Review Conference outcome by the organization of work is of utmost importance for this Meeting. We hope that this delicate balance will be preserved through the entire inter-sessional program.

The Group of NAM and Other States Parties to the BWC look forward to productive and forward-looking discussions in the coming week. We assure you of our full cooperation in your work. NAM also looks forward to holding of a successful Eight Review Conference in 2016.

Thank you.



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