

**Joint BRICS Statement on the Biological Weapons Convention (First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. Cluster 2: Other types of weapons of mass destruction), October 22, 2015**

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to deliver a Joint Statement on the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) on behalf of the BRICS countries: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

We attach high importance to the BWC as the first disarmament treaty banning an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. Welcoming the fact that 173 States Parties have acceded to the Convention, we stress the importance of efforts to ensure its universal adherence.

The original purpose of the BWC, as it is formulated in its Preamble, has remained relevant since 1972: "to exclude completely the possibility of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins being used as weapons". Its continuing importance is reaffirmed against the backdrop of the ever increasing pace of developments in the areas of dual-use science and technology relevant to the Convention.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the BWC's entry into force. We share the widespread interest among States Parties to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the implementation of the Convention through a legally binding Protocol. BRICS countries are convinced that the effectiveness of the BWC could be greatly enhanced through the adoption of a universal, legally binding, non-discriminatory Protocol, dealing with all articles of the Convention, including verification, in a balanced and comprehensive manner.

The strengthening of the Convention, if it is to realise its full potential, must be achieved on a sustainable basis impervious to the vicissitudes of what may lie ahead. By doing so we will send a clear signal that it is possible to enhance international security through multilateral negotiations, thus strengthening multilateralism, enhancing international cooperation and promoting the role of the Convention in reducing and eliminating the threat posed by biological weapons to international peace and security.

As we continue our endeavours to strengthen the BWC, it is vital that we should also focus on the developmental and co-operation features of the Convention. In this regard we stress the full and comprehensive implementation of Article X of the Convention recalling that States Parties have a legal obligation to facilitate and have the right to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the use of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins for peaceful purposes and not to hamper the economic and technological development of States Parties.

We call for the elimination of all restrictions to peaceful biological activities, in particular the exchange of equipment, materials and information needed to promote capacity building in the fields of sanitary control, prevention, diagnosis and eradication of infectious diseases, including the production of vaccines and biological materials.

States Parties may also be aware of the threat of terrorists gaining access to sensitive biological materials.

There needs to be a balance between security concerns and access to technological advancement. Oversight measures to identify and manage biological risks should be proportionate to the assessed risks and should not restrict science for peaceful purposes. Tighter controls over

sensitive goods and technologies must be complemented by provisions on cooperation, so that the pursuit of security goals will not hamper legitimate rights to technical and scientific development.

The BRICS countries look forward to working with all stakeholders so that the BWC's full potential may be fulfilled. We look forward to the holding of the Eighth Review Conference in 2016 to review the operation of the Convention taking into account the decisions and recommendations of the Seventh and other previous Review Conferences. To this end, we support a substantive preparatory process and call on all State Parties to show the necessary will to enhance the prospects of a successful Review Conference. BRICS are committed to playing a leading and constructive role in achieving this objective.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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