UK STATEMENT MX 2: 1500-1800, 2 AUGUST 2019: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY REVIEW

There has been considerable discussion since before the Seventh Review Conference on how we could create a more effective review process for S&T issues in a BTWC context. Delegations have presented some sixteen or so Working Papers, including one here at this session and we had a side event on this topic on Wednesday. There is clearly a good deal of enthusiasm for S&T topics as we can see from the number of side events and other meetings being held or planned; and the level of engagement at this MX. It is quite clear from all of this that we have a good deal of agreement on many aspects of this topic. We think it would

be useful to capture what these aspects are and use them as a basis for further discussion; there are some areas where differences exist, and these mostly cover the 'how' – namely how should a BTWC S&T process be structured and funded.

We see generally broad agreement on the following key features that ought to figure in an improved S&T review process:

- We need a more effective review process given the rate and nature of change in science and technology; the current MX 2 format has its uses, but we could certainly improve on it.

- A new S&T process should have a horizon scanning function – to look to see where

developments and convergences between technologies might create benefits and risks for the Convention.

- A review process should not, and cannot be, solely about risks and threats; it is also about identifying benefits for humanity; and how these could enhance implementation of Articles IV, VI, VII and X.

- We would also need to be able to task any such process with specific questions when new developments appear to pose challenges for the Convention. The key questions in this context would likely be have we got anything here to be concerned about and in what sort of timescale? And if so, what do we need to

do to mitigate or even prevent any adverse consequences?

- A new process could help advise States Parties on the actual or potential implications of S&T developments for national implementation of the Convention e.g. whether they might need to consider amending existing legislation or whether new legislation or guidance could or would likely be required.

- Any such process would need to be able to tap into the very diverse range of scientific and technological disciplines relevant for the Convention and not just in the more obvious area such as the life sciences – other disciplines such as AI are also relevant, and increasingly so as we

have heard at this meeting and in side events. This would cover human, animal and plant sciences, and extend to government, academic, industry and other research communities. It should tap into the work of other international organisations too.

- An S&T review process must be inclusive and geographically representative as well as transparent with reports published and accessible to all who need to see them.

- Any decisions on recommendations for action emerging from an improved S&T review process would be a matter for states parties to act upon nationally or in concert as required.

The differences between us centre on the best ways and means of structuring an improved review process. These could be summarised as follows. The process should be:

- Open-ended and open to all States Parties wishing to participate; or

- Consist of a smaller group or regionally selected experts, 20 or so members.

- Funded from the regular BTWC budget; or

- Funded from voluntary contributions.

Other organisational and structurally open questions include:

- Should there be some sort of advisory body only?

- Should an advisory body provide advice to a future ISP MX 2 process?

- How would such a body fit into a future ISP?

- What would the rules of procedure be for any advisory body?

- How would a smaller body access all the necessary sources of expertise required?

- How would we use the output of any review process?

Our task now therefore is to build on the areas where there is broad support and prepare a broadly supported proposal for adoption at the Ninth Review Conference in two years' time. We must also work to narrow down the differences over the 'how' as part of this process. The UK invites any state party with an interest to join us in this process and hope that many of us here could readily support the common criteria that we have outlined here.