

**MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE
DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCTION AND STOCKPILING OF
BACTERIOLOGICAL (BIOLOGICAL) AND TOXIN
WEAPONS AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION**

Geneva, 4-7 December 2018

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To the Permanent Representatives of the States Parties
and Signatories to the Convention on the Prohibition
of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological
(Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction

14 June 2018

Excellency,

We write to you in our capacities as 2018 Chairs of the Meetings of Experts and Meeting of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention.

We are aware that the consensus reached at the 2017 Meeting of States Parties (MSP 2017) to establish the mandate for an Intersessional Programme (ISP) 2018-2020 reflects a delicate balance of different views of States Parties and that the mandate must be fully respected. The MSP 2017 reached consensus on retaining the previous structures of Meetings of Experts (MXs) followed by Meetings of States Parties (MSP), allowing for a more expert oriented discussion in the MXs, as well as more political deliberations in the MSP.

It has become evident as we set out on the 2018-2020 ISP that, beginning with the MXs in August, success will depend on consistency in our approach, efficiency in the conduct of meetings, and quality of in-depth expert discussions that will take place within the time allocated for each meeting.

The draft provisional agendas for each MX are annexed to this letter. All issues listed in the MSP 2017 outcome document have been included in the provisional agendas. States Parties are invited to submit working papers for each MX by **15 July 2018**. Working papers should be submitted to the ISU to be shared with the Chair of each respective MX and issued as official documents. These working papers will be useful to delegations and Chairs in their preparations for successful in-depth expert discussions.

It should be noted that a general debate item is not included in any of the five MX draft provisional agendas given the short time allocated, as well as taking into account the expert nature of the MXs. Considering the draft provisional agendas, the programmes of work will be organised to optimise the time allocated to each MX.

In accordance with the mandate from the MSP 2017, each MX will adopt a factual report reflecting its deliberations, including possible outcomes. We intend to follow the practice from previous intersessional programmes whereby each MX Chair will prepare a paper listing inputs made during the discussions at each Meeting. In addition, each MX Chair will be invited to present a summary of the deliberations and any possible outcomes from each MX to the MSP in December. States Parties may also contribute with their views during the discussion of MX proceedings at the MSP.

We thus start the ISP leading to the Ninth Review Conference – all States Parties together – as custodians of the mandate given by the MSP 2017. The work of the MXs can contribute greatly to more substantial understanding of each of the issues in an environment of collegial exchange of knowledge and ideas to strengthen the Convention.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.



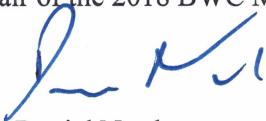
Mr. Ljupčo Jivan Gjorgjinski
Chair of the 2018 BWC Meeting of States Parties



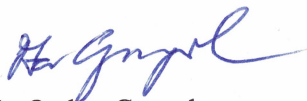
Ambassador Maria Teresa Almojuela
Chair of the 2018 BWC Meeting of Experts on Cooperation and Assistance, with a Particular Focus on Strengthening Cooperation and Assistance under Article X



Ambassador Julio Herráiz España
Chair of the 2018 BWC Meeting of Experts on Strengthening National Implementation



Mr. Daniel Nord
Chair of the 2018 BWC Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Preparedness and Response



Mr. Otakar Gorgol
Chair of the 2018 BWC Meeting on Institutional Strengthening of the Convention

Annex I:	MX1 Draft Provisional Agenda
Annex II:	MX2 Draft Provisional Agenda
Annex III:	MX3 Draft Provisional Agenda
Annex IV:	MX4 Draft Provisional Agenda
Annex V:	MX5 Draft Provisional Agenda

Annex I

Draft provisional agenda for the Meeting of Experts on Cooperation and Assistance, with a Particular Focus on Strengthening Cooperation and Assistance under Article X

1. Opening of the meeting
 2. Adoption of the agenda
 3. Adoption of the rules of procedure
 4. Consideration of the reports of the States Parties on their full and comprehensive implementation of all provisions of Article X
 5. Review of the report by the ISU on the operation of the assistance and cooperation database established by the Seventh Review Conference and renewed by the Eighth Review Conference and consideration of its further operationalization, including measures to further strengthen the operation of the database, including in the light of BWC/MSP/2017/4
 6. Identification of challenges and obstacles to developing international cooperation, assistance and exchange in the biological sciences and technology, including equipment and material, for peaceful purposes to their full potential, and possible ways and means of overcoming these
 7. Development of guidelines and procedures for mobilizing resources, including financial resources on a voluntary basis to address gaps and needs
 8. Facilitation of education, training, exchange and twinning programmes and other means of developing human resources in biological sciences and technology related to implementation of the Convention, particularly in developing countries
 9. Promotion of capacity building, through international cooperation, in biosafety and biosecurity and for detecting, reporting and responding to outbreaks of infectious disease or biological weapons attacks, including in the areas of preparedness, response, and crisis management and mitigation
 10. Collaboration with international organizations and networks related to combating infectious diseases at all levels, as well as regional and sub-regional cooperation to promote implementation of all articles of the Convention
 11. Adoption of the factual report reflecting the deliberations of the meeting, including possible outcomes
 12. Closing of the meeting
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Annex II

Draft provisional agenda for the Meeting of Experts on review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention

1. Opening of the meeting
 2. Adoption of the agenda
 3. Adoption of the rules of procedure
 4. Review of science and technology developments relevant to the Convention, including for the enhanced implementation of all articles of the Convention as well as the identification of potential benefits and risks of new science and technology developments relevant to the Convention, with a particular attention to positive implications
 5. Biological risk assessment and management
 6. Development of a voluntary model code of conduct for biological scientists and all relevant personnel, and biosecurity education, by drawing on the work already done on this issue in the context of the Convention, adaptable to national requirements
 7. Genome editing, taking into consideration, as appropriate, the issues identified above
 8. Any other science and technology developments of relevance to the Convention and also to the activities of relevant multilateral organizations such as the WHO, OIE, FAO, IPPC and OPCW
 9. Adoption of the factual report reflecting the deliberations of the meeting, including possible outcomes
 10. Closing of the meeting
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Annex III

Draft provisional agenda for the Meeting of Experts on strengthening national implementation

1. Opening of the meeting
 2. Adoption of the agenda
 3. Adoption of the rules of procedure
 4. Measures related to Article IV of the Convention
 5. CBM submissions in terms of quantity and quality
 6. Various ways to promote transparency and confidence building under the Convention
 7. Role of international cooperation and assistance under Article X, in support of strengthening the implementation of the Convention
 8. Issues related to Article III, including effective measures of export control, in full conformity with all Articles of the Convention, including Article X
 9. Adoption of the factual report reflecting the deliberations of the meeting, including possible outcomes
 10. Closing of the meeting
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Annex IV

Draft provisional agenda for the Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Adoption of the rules of procedure
4. Practical challenges facing the implementation of Article VII, and possible solutions
5. A set of guidelines and formats to assist a State Party, if required, when submitting an application for assistance in the framework of Article VII
6. Procedures, including the establishment and use of the assistance database, to improve the prompt and efficient response without preconditions to a request of assistance by a State Party under Article VII, and coordination and cooperation among States Parties and with relevant international and regional organizations such as WHO, OIE and FAO, as appropriate
7. Examination of how the concept of mobile biomedical units might contribute to effective assistance, response and preparation with a view to enhancing implementation of the Convention
8. Exploration of approaches by which States Parties, individually or collectively, might contribute to the strengthening of international response capabilities for infectious disease outbreaks, whether natural or deliberate in origin
9. Exploration of means to prepare for, respond to and render assistance in case of the possible hostile use of biological agents and toxins against agriculture, livestock as well as the natural environment
10. Adoption of the factual report reflecting the deliberations of the meeting, including possible outcomes
11. Closing of the meeting

Annex V

Draft provisional agenda for the Meeting of Experts on Institutional strengthening of the Convention

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Adoption of the rules of procedure
4. Consideration of the full range of approaches and options to further strengthen the Convention and its functioning through possible additional legal measures or other measures in the framework of the Convention
5. Adoption of the factual report reflecting the deliberations of the meeting, including possible outcomes
6. Closing of the meeting