

**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, 14-18 December 2015

Secretariat:
BWC Implementation Support Unit
United Nations Office for Disarmament
Affairs (Geneva Branch)
Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

tel: +41 (0)22 917 2230
fax: +41 (0)22 917 0483
e-mail: bwc@unog.ch
web: <http://www.unog.ch/bwc>

To the Permanent Representatives in Geneva 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

27 May 2015

Excellency,

BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION: MEETING OF EXPERTS

I am writing once more in my capacity as Chairman of the 2015 meetings of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) to update you on preparations for the Meeting of Experts, which will be held at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 10 to 14 August 2015.

I am most grateful for the suggestions and comments I received following my last letter to you, dated 11 February 2015, in particular those received at the regional group meetings in March. I would like to share with you my current thinking on how we might best prepare for the forthcoming Meeting of Experts.

Programme of work

I remain committed to build upon the solid foundations laid by my predecessors. I am aware of the importance of retaining the correct balance between the various agenda items. The attached provisional programme of work is closely based on that of 2012, 2013 and 2014. It lists the sub-items of the respective Standing Agenda Items, highlighting those which were originally proposed for consideration in 2015 according to my distinguished predecessor, Ambassador Boujemâa Delmi of Algeria in his letter dated 21 June 2012. It also reflects the biennial item we are to consider this year according to the Final Document of the Seventh Review Conference.

As we did last year, I am proposing that we assign one full day to each of the three Standing Agenda Items as I believe this will facilitate the attendance of relevant experts, support a focused and structured discussion and allow us to match side events insofar as possible to the topics of the formal meeting. This means we will split our consideration of the biennial item on how to strengthen implementation of Article VII over two non-consecutive days as was done last year. I hope that this will allow delegations to reflect on our deliberations in the first session, prior to the second session on this issue. I trust that delegations will find this draft programme acceptable and a useful aid for preparations for the meeting.

Background papers

As I indicated at the regional group meetings in March, I have tasked the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) to provide brief background information documents on each of the Standing Agenda Items and to update last year's background information document on the role of international organizations in the provision of assistance and coordination relevant to Article VII.

I would be grateful for any insights or suggestions for additional ISU background information documents that could assist us in our deliberations.

Working papers

I encourage all delegations to inform me and the ISU of any working papers you are preparing, and any statements or presentations you plan to make. In order for working papers to be fully considered by the Meeting of Experts, I suggest that States Parties submit them to the ISU as far in advance of the Meeting as possible.

Observers and guests of the meeting

In line with past practice, and following feedback and suggestions provided by States Parties, I have compiled the attached provisional list of relevant international organizations, professional and academic associations, and other NGOs and experts who might contribute to our work by sharing their experience and expertise at the Meeting of Experts. In accordance with our established procedures, as a first step I will be writing to the intergovernmental organizations to notify them of the meeting, and will invite the other organizations and experts to participate as guests of the meeting.

If you would like to nominate any additional organizations or experts, I encourage you to contact me as soon as possible.

Sponsorship for participation

I have noted how much we have benefitted in recent meetings from the participation of a broader range of States Parties. The sponsorship programme is an important tool to bring more voices to our meeting. This year we have already received voluntary contributions from two States Parties, and I would like to thank the governments of Finland and the Netherlands for these generous contributions.

With these contributions, I hope that we will see an increased participation in this year's meetings. In order to make the most efficient use of these contributions, I would encourage those States Parties considering requesting assistance under this programme to do so **by 15 June 2015**, by contacting the ISU. Further information is available on the BWC website at [http://www.unog.ch/80256EE600585943/\(httpPages\)/D1355E91BB7FEF06C1257E44004E000C?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/80256EE600585943/(httpPages)/D1355E91BB7FEF06C1257E44004E000C?OpenDocument) Once submitted, the requests will then be considered in accordance with the decision of the Seventh Review Conference.

I encourage any additional States Parties in a position to do so to consider making voluntary contributions to fund this programme as soon as possible.

Registration

Registration for the Meeting of Experts is now open. I invite all States Parties to register their participation through the usual procedure, as described at: www.unog.ch/bwc/meeting In order to avoid delays, I would kindly request all delegations to register by **31 July 2015**.

Confidence-building Measures (CBMs)

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind and encourage all States Parties to submit their CBM returns for 2015. The ISU has informed me that to date it has received 56 returns, slightly below the average for this time of the year. Although the 15 April deadline has passed, CBMs can still be submitted to the ISU at any time. I would like to remind States Parties of the offers for assistance in compiling CBMs that are listed in the cooperation and assistance database, and of the advice and guidance available on the BWC website.

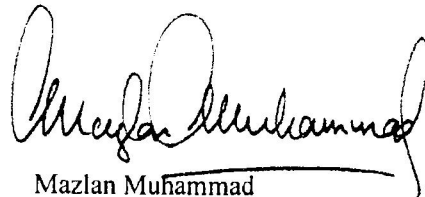
Next steps

I hope that we now have a clear understanding of the structure and format of the Meeting of Experts. As was done in 2014, I will be asking the ISU to compile and post an informal indicative schedule for the meeting on the BWC website. This will provide details of the contributions that States Parties have informed us they wish to make, contributions by international organizations and guests of the meeting as well as planned side events. Please remember to consult the website (www.unog.ch/bwc/meeting) regularly for the latest information and documents.

The two Vice-chairs, Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast of the Netherlands and Ambassador Mr. György Molnár, Special Representative of the Foreign Minister of Hungary for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-proliferation, and myself remain at your disposal for consultations. We welcome your further feedback and ideas. I propose to consult the regional groups for another exchange of views in the week of 29 June, but please do not hesitate to contact me before then if there is any matter you would like to discuss.

Thank you again for your active support and collaboration and your valuable feedback. I am confident that we have laid the foundations for a productive and successful Meeting of Experts, and I look forward to working with you during the meeting in August.

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



Mazlan Muhammad
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of
Malaysia to the UN and other International
Organisations
Chairman of the BWC Meeting of States
Parties

Attachments:

- 1) Draft provisional programme of work (2 pages)
- 2) List of observers and invitees (2 pages)

Provisional programme of work for the Meeting of Experts

Submitted by the Chairman

<i>Day</i>	<i>AM (10:00–13:00)</i>	<i>PM (15:00–18:00)</i>
Mon 10/8	<p>Opening formalities (agenda items 1–4)</p> <p>Introductory statements</p> <p>Informal session for NGO statements</p>	<p>How to strengthen implementation of Article VII, including consideration of detailed procedures and mechanisms for the provision of assistance and cooperation by States Parties (agenda item 8)</p>
Tue 11/8	<p>Cooperation and assistance, with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation and assistance under Article X (agenda item 5):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reports by States Parties on their implementation of Article X, and reports by the ISU on the operation of the database system to facilitate assistance requests and offers; – 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 means of overcoming these; – A range of specific measures for the full and comprehensive implementation of Article X taking into account all of its provisions, including facilitation of cooperation and assistance, including in terms of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for peaceful purposes, and identification of critical gaps and needs in these areas;¹ – Ways and means to target and mobilize resources, including financial resources, to address gaps and needs for assistance and cooperation, in particular from developed to developing States Parties, and from international and regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders. 	<p>Cooperation and assistance, with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation and assistance under Article X (agenda item 5):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Education, training, exchange and twinning programmes and other means of developing human resources in the biological sciences and technology relevant to the implementation of the Convention, particularly in developing countries;¹ – 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; – Coordination of cooperation with other relevant international and regional organizations, and other relevant stakeholders.
Wed 12/8	<p>Review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention (agenda item 6), focusing on advances in production, dispersal and delivery technologies of biological agents and toxins:</p>	<p>Review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention (agenda item 6), focusing on advances in production, dispersal and delivery technologies of biological agents and toxins:</p>

¹ This sub-item was originally allocated for consideration in 2015 by the 2012 Chairman in his letter to States Parties of 21 June 2012.

Day	AM (10:00–13:00)	PM (15:00–18:00)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – New science and technology developments that have potential for uses contrary to the provisions of the Convention; – New science and technology developments that have potential benefits for the Convention, including those of special relevance to disease surveillance, diagnosis and mitigation; – voluntary codes of conduct and other measures to encourage responsible conduct by scientists, academia and industry;¹ – education and awareness-raising about risks and benefits of life sciences and biotechnology.¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Science- and technology-related developments relevant to the activities of multilateral organizations such as the WHO, OIE, FAO, IPPC and OPCW; – Possible measures for strengthening national biological risk management, as appropriate, in research and development involving new science and technology developments of relevance to the Convention; – Any other science and technology developments of relevance to the Convention.
Thu 13/8	<p>Strengthening national implementation (agenda item 7):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A range of specific measures for the full and comprehensive implementation of the Convention, especially Articles III and IV; – Ways and means to enhance national implementation, sharing best practices and experiences, including the voluntary exchange of information among States Parties on their national implementation, enforcement of national legislation, strengthening of national institutions and coordination among national law enforcement institutions; – Regional and sub-regional cooperation that can assist national implementation of the Convention. 	<p>Strengthening national implementation (agenda item 7):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – National, regional and international measures to improve laboratory biosafety and security of pathogens and toxins;¹ – Any potential further measures, as appropriate, relevant for implementation of the Convention.¹
Fri 14/8	<p>How to strengthen implementation of Article VII, including consideration of detailed procedures and mechanisms for the provision of assistance and cooperation by States Parties (agenda item 8)</p>	<p>Adoption of the factual report reflecting the deliberations of the meeting (agenda item 9)</p> <p>Closing of the meeting (agenda item 10)</p>

Proposed participants other than States

I. United Nations

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 Committee

United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF)

United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)

II. International Organizations

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)

Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

World Bank

World Health Organization (WHO)

World Organization for Animal Health (OIE)

III. Guests of the Meeting

A. International professional and scientific organizations

Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO)

Developing Countries Vaccine Manufacturers Network (DCVMN)

IAP: Global Network of Science Academies

International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA)

B. Other organizations and individual experts

Médecins Sans Frontières

Save the Children

International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG)

Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC)

Trevor Shoemaker (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Uganda)

Professor Peter Piot, (Director of the School and Professor of Global Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine)