

## **Biological Weapons Convention: Regional Group Meetings May 2009**

### **Chairman's Speaking Notes**

*Group of NAM and Other States: 15:00, Thursday 28 May 2009, Room XXIII*

*Western Group: 16:00, Thursday 28 May 2009, Room XXIII*

*Eastern European Group: 17:00, Thursday 28 May 2009, Room XXIII*

#### Introduction

- This meeting is a follow-up to my letter to States Parties of 24 April (available on the ISU website) which outlined developments in planning for the Meeting of Experts (24-28 August).
- I have little to add to what is in the letter. My main interest in holding this meeting is to hear from you, in particular:
  - your views, questions and suggestions on the proposed arrangements for the Meeting of Experts;
  - the state of your preparations for the Meeting;
  - updates on your efforts on universalization.

#### Preparations for the Meeting of Experts

- I would like to thank those delegations which have already begun their preparations in earnest. At least one working paper has already been submitted, and a number of delegations have been discussing their preparations with the ISU.
- I want to emphasise the importance of including relevant experts on your national delegations:
  - please consider including experts from health ministries (e.g. National IHR Focal Point), other government agencies involved in disease surveillance and response, and relevant scientific, professional and private-sector bodies;
- Not all States Parties have the resources to send relevant experts to Geneva, and these are often the States Parties that have the most to gain from participating in the Meeting of Experts.
  - I again appeal to you to consider providing sponsorship to allow other States Parties to participate fully with experts from capital.
- I hope delegations have had a chance to review the list of organizations I am proposing to invite to the Meeting of Experts.
  - The list is open-ended: I welcome additional suggestions at any time.
  - Participation of these invited organizations will be in accordance with past practice.
- You will also have seen the outline of the proposed structure of the Meeting of Experts, which includes statements, presentations, discussion panels and a poster session.

- I would like to emphasise the time limits of five minutes for national statements and 15 minutes for technical presentations. Please make sure that your colleagues who are preparing contributions are aware of these limits from the outset;
- I encourage participation in the poster session, as this proved last year to be a very effective tool for promoting interaction among experts. Further details on preparing posters are now available on the ISU website.
- At our last meeting, I asked you to start considering what *specific* assistance you might need or be able to offer for building capacity in the area of disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis and containment.
  - I am interested in hearing about progress on this, as well as any questions or observations you might have.
  - Again, I urge you to give this information to the ISU well before the Meeting of Experts.

### Universalization

- At our last meeting I urged you to contact states not party – especially those which with you have a close bilateral relationship – and lobby them to join the Convention.
  - Would any delegation like to report now on such contacts?
- I can report that I wrote to the foreign ministers of the several states not party in the South Pacific region. An ISU member then travelled to Vanuatu in late April and met officials from most of the states not party in the region.
  - As we would expect, there is no in-principle objection from these countries to joining the BWC; it is a matter of awareness and national priorities;
  - I am optimistic that we will secure one or more accessions from this region over the coming months.

### Confidence-building Measures (CBMs)

- Although the deadline of 15 April has passed, it is possible to submit CBMs at any time, and I strongly encourage all States Parties to do so.
  - So far, 44 States Parties have submitted CBMs this year;
  - Please contact the ISU if you need help or guidance with completing your CBM.

### Conclusion

- Preparations for the Meeting of Experts are proceeding well, and I am grateful to States Parties for their constructive feedback, suggestions and hard work so far.
  - I am very interested in your views, and in updates on your preparations. We have the opportunity to talk now, and I am also at your disposal for bilateral consultations.
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