

**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, 10-14 December 2012

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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

21 June 2012

BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION: MEETING OF EXPERTS 16-20 JULY

Excellency,

I am writing once more in my capacity as Chairman of the 2012 meetings of the Biological Weapons Convention, to update you on preparations for the Meeting of Experts following my letter to you of 1 June 2012, a number of bilateral consultations, and my consultations with the regional groups in the week of 11-15 June.

I am most grateful to the coordinators of the regional groups for organising the consultations, and I sincerely thank all delegations for their constructive and helpful feedback both in the regional group meetings and the bilateral consultations. Taking into account the various ideas and suggestions, and having consulted with the Vice-chairs, I propose we proceed as follows.

Programme of work

Many delegations emphasized the short time available during the meeting and preferred not to allocate any time to a general exchange of views. But some have indicated their intention to make introductory statements that cover several of the agenda items. Some have also asked if the traditional slot for NGO statements will be provided, and I have received a letter from Professor Graham Pearson of the University of Bradford making the same request on behalf of NGOs. To accommodate both these concerns while still retaining two full sessions for each substantive agenda item, I have prepared the attached slightly revised programme. In the revised programme, the opening session is devoted to the opening formalities, an opportunity for any introductory statements, and the traditional informal slot of around one hour for NGO statements. The remainder of the programme is thus pushed back by one session, and therefore the "overflow" session on Friday morning has been dropped.

In addition, in response to requests from delegations, I have added sub-items on codes of conduct and education and awareness-raising to the second science and technology session on Wednesday morning. I also attach a revised paper on the allocation of sub-items to reflect this change.

Observers and guests of the meeting

To clarify the situation and to accommodate the concerns expressed by some delegations, I would like to distinguish more clearly between observers and guests of the meeting. Intergovernmental organizations, such as United Nations organs, WHO, OPCW and INTERPOL, are entitled to participate in the Meeting of Experts as observers, in accordance with the rules of procedure. They do not require an invitation from the Chairman, although I will as a matter of courtesy write to inform them of the meeting. The designation of "Guest of the Meeting" was used in the previous intersessional programmes for organizations and individual experts of particular relevance, invited by the Chairman under his own responsibility. Guests of the Meeting were generally invited to speak in a particular part of the programme, often together in a discussion panel to make the best use of limited time. I propose to continue with this practice, and will invite the organizations and experts listed in the attachment. As noted above, NGOs other than those invited as Guests of the Meeting will be able to make statements in the informal session on the Monday morning.

Background papers

In response to suggestions from delegations, I have requested the Implementation Support Unit to prepare two additional background papers, one on new science and technology developments that have potential benefits for the Convention, and the other on resource mobilization for cooperation and assistance.

Poster session

Several delegations have enquired about a poster session, as was held in the meetings of the previous intersessional programme. Because of the full programme, it will not be possible to hold a poster session during official meeting time. But poster display facilities will be available throughout the week, and I would suggest holding an informal poster session from 18:00-19:00 on Tuesday 17 July. Please contact the ISU if you would like to contribute a poster on any of the substantive agenda items.

Sponsorship for participation

I am pleased to report that three States Parties have so far announced their intention to contribute to the sponsorship programme. On behalf of all States Parties, I thank these governments for their generosity and their commitment to realising the decisions of the Review Conference. I again encourage any other States Parties in a position to do so to consider making voluntary contributions to fund this programme as soon as possible.

Next steps

I hope that we have now settled the major questions on the structure and format of the Meeting of Experts. I encourage all delegations to press ahead with their preparations according to our agenda and programme of work, and to keep me and the ISU informed of

any working papers you are preparing, and any statements or presentations you plan to make. Please remember to consult the ISU website (www.unog.ch/bwc) regularly for the latest information and documents.

I, along with the two Vice-chairs, remain at your disposal for bilateral or group consultations at any time, and we welcome your feedback and ideas. Thank you again for your active support and collaboration: we have made a good start, and I think we are heading in the right direction to ensure a productive, efficient and effective Meeting of Experts.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a smaller, more intricate flourish.

Boujemâa Delmi
Ambassador and Permanent
Representative of Algeria
Chairman of the Meeting of States
Parties

Attachments: (1) revised programme of work
(2) revised allocation of sub-items
(3) revised list of invitees

Attachment 1:

Revised provisional programme of work for the Meeting of Experts [revision of 15 June 2012]

Submitted by the Chairman

<i>Day</i>	<i>AM (10:00–13:00)</i>	<i>PM (15:00–18:00)</i>
Mon 16/7	<p>Opening formalities (agenda items 1-4)</p> <p>Introductory statements</p> <p>Informal session for NGO statements</p>	<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 – 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; – coordination of cooperation with other relevant international and regional organizations, and other relevant stakeholders
Tue 17/7	<p>Review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention (agenda item 6):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – advances in enabling technologies, including high-throughput systems for sequencing, synthesizing and analyzing DNA; bioinformatics and computational tools; and systems biology – 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 – science- and technology-related developments relevant to the activities of multilateral organizations such as the WHO, OIE, FAO, IPPC and OPCW 	<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"> – 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 – 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

<i>Day</i>	<i>AM (10:00–13:00)</i>	<i>PM (15:00–18:00)</i>
Wed 18/7	<p>Review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention (agenda item 6):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – any other science and technology developments of relevance to the Convention – 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 – voluntary codes of conduct and other measures to encourage responsible conduct by scientists, academia and industry – education and awareness-raising about risks and benefits of life sciences and biotechnology. 	<p>Strengthening national implementation (agenda item 7):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 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
Thu 19/7	<p>How to enable fuller participation in the CBMs (agenda item 8)</p>	<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 – regional and sub-regional cooperation that can assist national implementation of the Convention
Fri 20/7	<p>How to enable fuller participation in the CBMs (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>

Attachment 2:

BWC Intersessional Programme: Possible division of Standing Agenda sub-items (revised 15 June)

1. Cooperation and assistance, with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation and assistance under Article X

Every year:

(a) 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;

(d) 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;

(g) coordination of cooperation with other relevant international and regional organizations, and other relevant stakeholders.

2012 (and 2014):

(b) 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;

(f) 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;

2013 (and 2015):

(c) 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;

(e) 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;

2. Review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention

Every year:

(a) new science and technology developments that have potential for uses contrary to the provisions of the Convention;

(b) new science and technology developments that have potential benefits for the Convention, including those of special relevance to disease surveillance, diagnosis and mitigation;

(f) science- and technology-related developments relevant to the activities of multilateral organizations such as the WHO, OIE, FAO, IPPC and OPCW;

(g) any other science and technology developments of relevance to the Convention.

2012:

Advances in enabling technologies, including high-throughput systems for sequencing, synthesizing and analyzing DNA; bioinformatics and computational tools; and systems biology.

(c) 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;

(d) voluntary codes of conduct and other measures to encourage responsible conduct by scientists, academia and industry;

(e) education and awareness-raising about risks and benefits of life sciences and biotechnology.

2013:

Advances in technologies for surveillance, detection, diagnosis and mitigation of infectious diseases, and similar occurrences caused by toxins in humans, animals and plants.

(d) voluntary codes of conduct and other measures to encourage responsible conduct by scientists, academia and industry;

(e) education and awareness-raising about risks and benefits of life sciences and biotechnology.

2014:

Advances in the understanding of pathogenicity, virulence, toxicology, immunology and related issues

(c) 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;

2015:

Advances in production, dispersal and delivery technologies of biological agents and toxins.

(d) voluntary codes of conduct and other measures to encourage responsible conduct by scientists, academia and industry;

(e) education and awareness-raising about risks and benefits of life sciences and biotechnology.

3. Strengthening national implementation

Every year:

(b) 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;

2012 (and 2014)

(a) a range of specific measures for the full and comprehensive implementation of the Convention, especially Articles III and IV;

(c) regional and sub-regional cooperation that can assist national implementation of the Convention;

2013 (and 2015)

(d) national, regional and international measures to improve laboratory biosafety and security of pathogens and toxins;

(e) any potential further measures, as appropriate, relevant for implementation of the Convention.

Attachment 3:

Organizations and Experts to be Invited by the Chairman as Guests of the Meeting

- IAP: the Global Network of Science Academies
- International Union of Microbiological Societies (IUMS)
- International Union of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (IUBMB)
- Andrew Pitt (Aston University) – provided an overview of these technologies for both the S&T meetings held prior to both BWC & CWC review conferences
- D. M. Gandhi (NeoBioMed Services) – enabling technologies: wrote a review of relevant S&T advances prior to the review conference
- International Gene Synthesis Consortium / Industry Association Synthetic Biology
- Editors of *Science* and *Nature*
- Verification, Research and Training Information Centre (VERTIC)
- International Federation of Biosafety Associations (IFBA)