

**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

1 June 2012

BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION: MEETING OF EXPERTS 16-20 JULY

Excellency,

I am writing to introduce myself as the new Chairman of the 2012 meetings of the Biological Weapons Convention. Allow me to begin by thanking you both for your support of my nomination, and for your patience and understanding of the circumstances that have led to the change of Chair.

The BWC Meeting of Experts will be held in Geneva as planned from 16 to 20 July 2012. I would like to assure you that I intend to continue along the same lines set by my predecessor, Ambassador Jazaïry, as outlined in his letter to States Parties of 27 February. I am privileged to be supported in my task by the two Vice-chairs, Ambassador Alexandre Fasel of Switzerland and Dr. Cezary Lusinski of Poland.

Agenda and programme of work

I know that delegations are eager to plan their participation in the Meeting of Experts. My first priority is therefore to prepare an agenda and programme of work for the meeting that will allow us to deal effectively and efficiently with the large range of topics in the very limited time available. In consultation with the Vice-chairs, and taking into account the views expressed by delegations over the past months, I have prepared the attached provisional agenda and programme of work.

The agenda is simply a concise reflection of the decisions taken by the Seventh Review Conference on the three standing agenda items and other matters to be considered by the Meeting of Experts. The programme of work is where I have attempted to provide some guidance on how and when the various sub-items will be considered. You will note that not every sub-item is included: my proposal is to focus on the included sub-items this year, and

then focus on the remaining ones next year. We could then perhaps repeat this alternation for 2014 and 2015, if it proves satisfactory. Some sub-items will by their nature need to be considered every year: I attach an indicative listing showing how the alternation could work.

I would like to stress that the programme of work is only an indicative guide, intended to help delegations prepare their participation, structure our discussions, and make the best use of our time to deal efficiently with the topics. States Parties will be free to raise any item on the agenda, and it is certainly not my intention to exclude any issue that any State Party considers important, or to impose any arbitrary prioritization of one topic over another. We will also need to retain a degree of flexibility, and be ready to adjust the programme as the meeting progresses.

I trust that delegations will find these draft documents acceptable.

Invited participants

As mentioned by Ambassador Jazaïry in his letter of 27 February, we need to identify the relevant international organizations, professional and academic associations, and other NGOs and experts that we might wish to invite to participate in the Meeting of Experts and share their experience and expertise, on the same basis as in the previous intersessional programme. I attach a preliminary list of possible invitees, and I would welcome any suggestions you might have.

Background papers

The Implementation Support Unit proposes to prepare two background papers related to the standing agenda item on science and technology: one on advances in enabling technologies, and the other on the recent H5N1 avian influenza transmissibility research and the controversy surrounding its publication. If you would like to suggest any other background papers, I invite you to contact me as soon as possible.

Outcome of the meeting

In the absence of any specific suggestion to the contrary, I would propose to maintain the same structure and approach for the factual report of the Meeting of Experts as in the previous intersessional programmes. That is, the ideas and proposals put forward by delegations in the course of the meeting will be compiled into a list, which will have no status but will be annexed to the report under my responsibility. Following the Meeting, again as in the previous intersessional programmes, I will prepare under my responsibility a synthesis of these ideas and proposals, to assist delegations in their preparations for the Meeting of States Parties in December.

Sponsorship for participation

As recognised by the Seventh Review Conference, participation of developing States Parties in the meetings of the intersessional programme is very important. Unfortunately, I am informed by the ISU that no contributions have yet been made to the sponsorship programme established by the Conference to support such participation. I urge any States Parties in a position to do so to consider making voluntary contributions to fund this programme as soon

as possible. Otherwise it will most regrettably not be possible to sponsor any participants for this year's Meeting of Experts.

Next steps

I propose to meet the regional groups as soon as possible, to hear your feedback and to discuss the way forward. Time is short, and I am counting on your support to move quickly to prepare for an efficient and productive Meeting of Experts. I thank you again for the confidence you have expressed in supporting my appointment as Chairman, and I look forward to working with you throughout the year to develop the intersessional programme and improve the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention.

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) proposed agenda
(2) proposed programme of work
(3) possible allocation of sub-items
(4) list of possible invitees

Proposed provisional agenda for the Meeting of Experts

Submitted by the Chairman

1. Opening of the meeting
 2. Adoption of the agenda
 3. Adoption of the programme of work
 4. Adoption of the rules of procedure
 5. Standing agenda item: cooperation and assistance, with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation and assistance under Article X
 6. Standing agenda item: review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention
 7. Standing agenda item: strengthening national implementation
 8. Biennial item: how to enable fuller participation in the Confidence-building Measures (CBMs)
 9. Adoption of the factual report reflecting the deliberations of the meeting
 10. Closing of the meeting
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Proposed 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 16/7	<p>Opening formalities (agenda items 1-4)</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 	<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;
Tue 17/7	<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; 	<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;

<i>Day</i>	<i>AM (10:00–13:00)</i>	<i>PM (15:00–18:00)</i>
Wed 18/7	<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 	How to enable fuller participation in the CBMs (agenda item 8)
Thu 19/7	<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 	How to enable fuller participation in the CBMs (agenda item 8)
Fri 20/7	<p>Cooperation and assistance, with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation and assistance under Article X (agenda item 5)*</p> <p>Additional time for discussion on standing agenda items as required</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>

* to compensate for time devoted to opening formalities in AM session on Monday 16 July

BWC Intersessional Programme: Possible division of Standing Agenda sub-items

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;

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.
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2012 BWC Meeting of Experts: Possible Guests of the Meeting

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

- UNSCR 1540 Committee – as the mandated clearing house for relevant assistance and cooperation
- World Health Organization – for assistance to implement the IHR
- World Organization for Animal Health – for assistance to build animal disease surveillance and mitigation capacity
- Food and Agriculture Organization – for assistance to build animal disease surveillance and mitigation capacity
- Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity – for experience with the assistance clearing-house mechanisms under the CBD and Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

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

- IAP: the Global Network of Science Academies – review of advances / enabling technologies
- International Union of Microbiological Societies (IUMS) – review of advances / enabling technologies
- International Union of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (IUBMB) – review of advances / enabling technologies
- International Council for Science (ICSU) – review of advances / enabling technologies
- Chair of OPCW Scientific Advisory Board Temporary Working Group on Convergence – for convergence of biology and chemistry
- Andrew Pitt (Aston University) – enabling technologies: 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 – enabling technologies - developments in screening procedures for commercial gene synthesis.
- Editor, Science – Influenza research
- Editor, Nature – Influenza research

Strengthening national implementation

- INTERPOL – for their efforts to build relevant law enforcement capacity
- Verification, Research and Training Information Centre (VERTIC) – for their work in assisting States Parties with implementation
- International Federation of Biosafety Associations (IFBA) – for their work on building biosafety and biosecurity capacity
- UNSCR 1540 Committee – for their work on developing national capacity to address bioterrorism
- UNICRI – for the CBRN Centres of Excellence project