

Biological Weapons Convention: Regional Group Meetings Feb-Mar 2008

Talking Points for the Chairman

Introduction

- This is the first opportunity to meet the regional groups and discuss plans for what will be a busy year, with two important and complex topics:
 - (i) *National, regional and international measures to improve biosafety and biosecurity, including laboratory safety and security of pathogens and toxins;*
 - (ii) *Oversight, education, awareness raising, and adoption and/or development of codes of conduct with the aim of preventing misuse in the context of advances in bio-science and bio-technology research with the potential of use for purposes prohibited by the Convention.*
- I hope all delegations have received my letter of 14 February (additional copies are available at the entrance). This meeting is a chance to go over the issues covered in the letter, as well as any other matters delegations would like to raise.
- My overall approach is to continue with the same pattern that has produced good results in previous years:
 - No sudden changes, no surprises;
 - All work in accordance with our mandate, all decisions by consensus;
 - Some minor new suggestions to deal more efficiently and effectively with our particular topics this year: to be developed in consultation with States Parties.
- Reports of the Meeting of Experts and Meeting of States Parties will follow the precedent of previous years.
- I encourage all States Parties from all regions, to participate actively in preparing for the meetings: it is a joint undertaking, not the Chairman's own project.

National information

- The topics are very broad and time is limited: careful planning and preparation is needed for the Meeting of Experts.
- Reports on national activities are valuable and welcome, but we must find a way of efficiently disseminating the information, so that the Meeting of Experts is not entirely devoted to national reports.
- Therefore I suggest States Parties provide information to the ISU, which will compile an online compendium that is regularly updated.

- There will still be an opportunity at the Meeting of Experts for States Parties to give brief introductions to their national measures, with further details available in the compendium.
- Working papers and presentations can then focus on more in-depth, thematic issues relevant to the topics.

Identifying Experts

- Important to have the right experts participating, from all regions, as well as from relevant international organisations, scientific bodies and professional associations.
- As was the case in 2005 (codes of conduct), the topics this year involve many actors from outside the traditional arms control world.
- Two possible ways to involve experts:
 - On national delegations: please try to include relevant experts on your delegation, including experts from the commercial, medical, scientific and academic sectors;
 - By invitation from the Chair: as in previous years, in consultation with States Parties I will identify relevant organisations and invite them to participate. Some possibilities are: [see list]. Suggestions are most welcome.
- Arrangements for participation of those other than states and intergovernmental organisations (e.g. academies of science, professional associations) will be made in consultation with States Parties, following previous practice.

Poster session

- I am interested in feedback on the proposal of a poster session as a way of facilitating informal interaction among experts.
- The poster session would **not** be a formal part of the meeting, and would not be included in the report: the purpose is only to encourage interaction and exchange.
- Any other ideas to increase interaction would also be welcome.

Universalization

- Good news: the United Kingdom is expected to confirm shortly that Zambia has deposited its instrument of accession and will be our 160th State Party. I will be writing to the remaining non-members.
- I encourage all States Parties to renew their contacts and activities, use the information in the 2007 universalization report, and report results to the ISU.

Sponsorship

- Increasing participation in our meetings from smaller States Parties, especially developing countries, is important to the effectiveness of our work.
- Please consider if you could sponsor attendance from another State Party, and inform the ISU if you can help.

Conclusion

- This is a preliminary consultation, to begin planning our work. I am flexible in my approach, and interested in your views on how to proceed.
 - I ask States Parties also to be flexible, open-minded and constructive as we develop our plans together.
 - We should always keep in mind the overall purpose of our work: to strengthen the BWC as an effective barrier against the development, transfer or use of biological weapons.
 - We are building on several years of constructive work, and on the common basis of the successful and wide-ranging outcome of the Sixth Review Conference: we should make the most of this important opportunity
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