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BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION: NEWS FROM THE ISU

Excellency

Further to Mr. Tim Caughley's letter of 26 June, I am pleased to write to you in my capacity of Head of the Biological Weapons Convention Implement Support Unit (ISU). I would like to inform you of the activities the Unit has begun in accordance with the decisions of the Sixth Review Conference, and to bring to your attention a number of actions which States Parties have agreed to undertake (the relevant decisions and recommendations can be found in the Final Document of the Conference, BWC/CONF.VI/6, which is available in all languages at <http://www.unog.ch/bwc>).

National contact point

The Sixth Review Conference decided that each State Party should designate, and provide the ISU with details of, a **national point of contact** for BWC issues. This national point of contact will facilitate the work of the States Parties during the 2007 – 2010 intersessional process; the comprehensive implementation and universalization of the Convention; and the exchange of confidence-building measures. Please use the enclosed form to nominate your national point of contact.

All communications to States Parties from the ISU will be addressed to the national contact point, and copied to the State Party's permanent mission in Geneva (or New York, for those States Parties which are not represented in Geneva). Where a national contact point has not yet been nominated, communications will continue to be addressed to permanent missions. Details of national contact points will be published in the restricted area of the BWC website (see below).

Secure website

The Sixth Review Conference mandated the ISU to "develop and maintain a **secure website** on CBMs (Confidence-Building Measures) to be accessible only to States Parties". The technical aspects of this project have now been completed and a restricted area of the website (www.unog.ch/bwc) is now ready for use by States Parties. A **username** and **password** are required to enter the restricted area, and these will be **issued to States Parties only**. Access to

the restricted area is through the *Information for States Parties* section of the website. Please see the enclosed information sheet for additional details.

The username and password for [*State Party*] are:

User Name: [*username of State Party*]

Password: [*password of State Party*]

For security reasons, it is only possible to provide each State Party with **one** username and password. Should other representatives from your government require access to the restricted area, they will use the same details as provided in this letter; it is up to your government to determine who should have access, and to provide them with the username and password. The ISU will only issue passwords to permanent missions to the United Nations in Geneva or New York, or to duly nominated BWC national contact points. Any other requests will be referred to permanent missions as appropriate. Please take appropriate measures to **keep passwords confidential**, as use of the restricted area will be monitored and each State Party will be accountable for any access via its username. Please contact the ISU immediately if your password has been lost or otherwise compromised.

To give States Parties the opportunity to test the access and security arrangements and examine the operation of the restricted area, no sensitive material will be placed there until **16 July 2007**. If you have any queries or concerns about the restricted area, I would be grateful if you would contact me before that date.

Confidence-building measures

The main content of the restricted area will be the confidence-building measures (CBMs) submitted by States Parties. In accordance with the decision of the Sixth Review Conference, the ISU intends to publish CBMs in the restricted area, with the agreement of the submitting State Party. As an additional layer of security, each CBM file will be encrypted and will only be able to be opened with a password. This password is different from the password given above, and is available on the main page of the restricted area.

To date, 48 States Parties have submitted CBMs in 2007. The ISU will publish these CBMs in the restricted area on 16 July 2007. Please check that the arrangements on the restricted area are satisfactory: we will assume that you agree that your CBM be published there **unless** you tell us otherwise.

IMPORTANT: Please notify us by 16 July 2007 if you DO NOT wish your CBM to be published in the restricted area of the website.

If one or more States Parties do not wish to publish their CBMs in the restricted area, the ISU will distribute to all States Parties a CD-ROM containing all CBMs submitted, including those not available on the website.

Please note that this electronic distribution system will completely replace the paper reports: there will be no hard-copy CBM document produced in 2007 or in future.

Obtaining universality

In addition to CBMs, the restricted area also contains information on efforts to obtain universality of the Convention. The Sixth Review Conference decided on several measures aimed at persuading states not party to join the Convention. In particular, the Conference requested States Parties to promote universalization through bilateral contacts and through regional and multilateral fora and activities, and to provide the ISU with relevant information on such efforts.

I would therefore like to encourage States Parties to inform the ISU of any universalization activities they undertake, and report the results of any contacts they might have with states not party on the subject of joining the Convention. Such information will be published in the restricted area of the BWC website, for the use of States Parties in planning and coordinating further universalization activities. The ISU will also add any further information that might be available from media reports and other public sources. I would invite States Parties which may be considering contacting a state not party to check the restricted area for the latest information on that state.

Meeting of Experts

The Meeting of Experts will be held at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 20 to 24 August 2007, and is open to all States Parties and signatories. The agenda for the meeting will be available shortly. Registration details will be available on the BWC website from 16 July. I would like to take this opportunity to remind States Parties of the letter dated 24 May 2007 from the Chairman of the meeting, Ambassador Masood Khan, which requests States Parties to provide the ISU with information on any national implementation measures adopted or revised since 2003 (the letter is available on the website, in the *Information for States Parties* section).

Financial matters

As agreed at the Sixth Review Conference, the ISU is funded by the States Parties through their annual assessments for the meetings of the intersessional process. The ISU is fully dependent on this funding: it receives nothing from the regular budget of the United Nations. It is therefore important for the continuity of operation of the ISU that States Parties pay their assessed contributions promptly. I thank those States Parties which have already paid their 2007 assessments, and request those which have not to do so as soon as possible.

In conclusion

I hope this letter has given a comprehensive overview of the status and activities of the ISU, and the related activities and undertakings of the States Parties. To summarise briefly the actions requested from your side:

- Nominate/confirm your national point of contact for the Convention;
- Use your username and password to log on to the restricted area of the website: check that you can view the area, and that the security arrangements are satisfactory to you;
- Notify the ISU by 16 July if you do **not** want your CBM published in the restricted area;

- Notify the ISU of any universalization activities your government has conducted or is planning, and check the restricted area of the website to for information on activities undertaken by other States Parties;
- Submit any information on new or revised national implementation measures, in preparation for the Meeting of Experts in August.

The website is updated regularly and will always have the most recent communications, announcements, official documents and other information. If you cannot find something on the website, or you have any other question or concern, please do not hesitate to contact us: our sole purpose is to help you in implementing the Convention.

I thank you for your cooperation, and look forward to working with you and your colleagues in effectively implementing the Biological Weapons Convention.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Richard Lennane". The signature is written in a cursive style. To the right of the signature is a vertical red line.

Richard Lennane
Head, Implementation Support Unit