

**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, 7-11 December 2009

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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

6 February 2009

Excellency,

It is my pleasure to write in my capacity as Chair of the 2009 meetings of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) to outline my plans for these meetings, and to invite your input and support in their preparation.

The Meeting of Experts will be held in Geneva from 24-28 August 2009, and the Meeting of States Parties from 7-11 December 2009. As decided by the Sixth Review Conference these meetings will, with a view to enhancing international cooperation, assistance and exchange in biological sciences and technology for peaceful purposes, discuss, and promote common understanding and effective action on promoting capacity building in the fields of disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis, and containment of infectious diseases:

- (i) For States Parties in need of assistance, identifying requirements and requests for capacity enhancement; and
- (ii) From States Parties in a position to do so, and international organizations, opportunities for providing assistance related to these fields.

My primary aim for our work this year is to continue the successful pattern established by previous meetings and ensure that we make best use of existing precedents and current working practices. I intend to work closely with States Parties to ensure a productive consensus outcome that helps to strengthen the Convention and enhance the use of biology for peaceful purposes. Attached to this letter are a series of proposals for the Meeting of Experts, including: thoughts on structured engagement – both amongst States Parties and with organisations relevant to our topic this year; planned outcomes of our efforts (so our meetings result in enhancements to capacity rather than just talking about it); background papers and tools that might be provided by the Implementation Support Unit; information that States Parties might wish to provide (such as details of their national disease surveillance, mitigation and response arrangements); opportunities to help others participate in the meeting; and, thoughts on next steps and a request for feedback from States Parties.

The second goal I have for this year is to focus our efforts on the universalization of the Convention. The latest document on this subject (BWC/MSP/2008/4) identifies 25 countries which are party to the much younger Chemical Weapons Convention but which are not yet party to

BTWC. Eight countries are party to neither convention. At the Sixth Review Conference in 2006, we decided that States Parties would promote the universality of the Convention through bilateral contact as well as through regional and multilateral fora and activities. In accordance with my mandate to coordinate these activities, I will work with regional groups to enlist their support. I believe that we can consider new ways which individual countries and groups of states could reach out to states not party to the BTWC in their region. Much work around the world remains to be done. While outreach from Geneva has its role, I am convinced that the message "JOIN THE BTWC" resonates much more powerfully when it comes from one or more neighbouring countries, which are best placed to explain both the process and benefits of ratification or accession to the Convention in the regional context.

A third objective I have for 2009 relates to assistance and advice to States Parties in the preparation of their Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). At the Meeting of States Parties in December 2008, several states noted that we seem to have reached a 'plateau' of between 60 and 70 states submitting CBMs each year. The Final Document of the Sixth Review Conference recognized the 'technical difficulties experienced by some States Parties in completing full and timely declarations'. I am convinced that we can help to overcome some of these technical difficulties. For example, the ISU has a wealth of experience, including sample submissions, with which to assist states. It is in the interest of all that this information be more widely available. Time zones and language differences must not impede the work of our officials in capitals who are being asked to complete these forms. To this end, I will be asking the ISU (in accordance with their mandate to serve as an information exchange point for assistance related to preparation of CBMs) to consolidate the available resources into an on-line, interactive "Guide to Completing the CBMs" which would be available electronically on the BTWC website in all six languages. I would also like to take this opportunity to encourage all States Parties to participate in the CBMs, and to remind you that the **deadline for submission is 15 April 2009**.

I look forward to discussing these and other ideas with you as part of initial meetings I will plan with regional groups at the end of February and in bilateral consultations thereafter. I invite your input and feedback on how best to make this year's activities useful to all current and future new members of the BTWC. The Implementation Support Unit is also at your disposal for any enquiries of a technical and administrative nature, and I encourage you to consult the ISU website (<http://www.unog.ch/bwc>) for up-to-date information and documentation.

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



Marius Grinius  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent  
Representative of Canada  
Chairman of the Meeting of States Parties

## **PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE 2009 MEETING OF EXPERTS OF THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION**

### **Engagement**

There are a significant number of activities undertaken by a wide range of states and international organizations that are relevant to this year's topic and our efforts this year. This will necessitate the exchange of a great deal of information - not only amongst ourselves but with other relevant organisations and initiatives. Collating these details will help us develop a clearer picture of what is already happening, which in turn will help us identify what more we might need to do. Becoming more familiar with relevant activities has already helped in planning for the Meeting of Experts and will surely also assist States Parties in their preparations as well as in identifying their need for, or ability to provide, relevant assistance.

Given the scale and scope of information to be exchanged, it will be necessary to develop a structured and planned approach to ensure that such details can be shared in a timely and efficient manner. Suggestions as to how we might accomplish this are most welcome, as are proposals as to which organisations would be most relevant to our work. States Parties are also invited to provide, through the Implementation Support Unit (ISU), their views on how best to link requirements and requests for assistance with offers or opportunities for collaboration. Given their 'clearing house' mandate, we must ensure we make full use of the good offices of the ISU to match demand with supply.

### **Enhancing Capacity**

In addition to our efforts to discuss and develop common understandings on our topic this year, we have the opportunity to focus our efforts on the third facet of our mandate - to take effective action. One proposal would be to set aside part of the Meeting of Experts for countries to identify and interact on areas where they desire collaboration. This would necessitate each and every States Party having a clear idea of what assistance they need, or could provide, prior to the start of our meeting. Such an effort should generate new synergies, ones that might not otherwise have been developed, ensuring that our meeting tangibly enhances capacity.

### **Background Information**

In line with past practice, the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) will be tasked with developing suitable background resources, including a series of background papers on relevant international and regional developments, existing agreements under the BTWC, similar arrangements in other international settings, as well as other areas of interest. The ISU will also be asked to develop further the assistance section of the restricted access part of the BTWC website, to act as a practical tool for our meetings this year (<http://www.unog.ch/bwc/restricted>) as well as for future efforts in enhancing capacity to deal with disease. I would encourage States Parties to review the information on this page and to contact the ISU with updates, alterations or additions.

The Meeting of Experts would become even more relevant if, in addition to the details provided by the ISU, states have access to information on relevant national disease surveillance, mitigation and response arrangements. Time will be set aside at the Meeting of Experts for presentations or statements by States Parties describing their national arrangements. It would assist with preparations for the meeting if relevant presentations and statements could be forward to the ISU at the earliest convenience prior to the summer.

### **Sponsorship for participation**

The ISU has already received several requests for assistance to participate in the Meeting of Experts. It is likely that further requests will be received in the coming months. In the interests of broadening participation in the important work of the Convention, particularly among developing countries, it is to

be hoped that States Parties will be able to help. Please contact the ISU if you may be in a position to offer any assistance.

#### Further consultations

Following the distribution of these proposed arrangements, the coordinators of the regional groups will be contacted by the ISU to arrange opportunities for the Chair to address the groups at the end of February. Interested States Parties are encouraged to contact the Chair directly, or through the ISU, to discuss these proposals, the Meeting of Experts, as well as other activities under the Convention this year.

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