



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA AND OTHER
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN SWITZERLAND**

To the Permanent Representatives in Geneva 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

24 April 2008

Excellency,

I am writing once more in my capacity as Chairman of the 2008 meetings of the Biological Weapons Convention to update you on preparations for the Meeting of Experts (18-22 August), following my letter to you of 14 February 2008 and subsequent consultations with the regional groups and individual delegations.

I would like to thank States Parties for their positive and constructive feedback, and for the various comments and suggestions and requests for clarification that have been made. In particular, I am grateful for the suggestions of relevant organisations and individual experts to invite to the Meeting of Experts. I would now like to outline how I propose to proceed from here, and also to answer the various queries that have been raised by delegations in the course of my bilateral and regional consultations.

Participation of relevant organisations and experts

As I discussed with the regional groups, experts may participate in the Meeting of Experts as members of national delegations, or may be invited by the Chairman as representatives of their organisations or in their personal capacities. I again encourage States Parties to make every effort to include relevant experts on their national delegations.

Following the various suggestions made by States Parties, past practice, and my own consultations, I have decided to invite the organisations on the annexed list. This list is not exhaustive, and if any delegation would like to propose additional invitees, they are most welcome to do so. I will also continue my own consultations, especially with commercial industry. I would like to reiterate that the participation of organisations and experts invited by the Chairman will be in accordance with our practice at previous BWC meetings, and I will consult States Parties on the precise arrangements once invitees have confirmed their attendance.

Organisation of the Meeting of Experts

As I stressed in my consultations with the regional groups, we have a large amount of material to cover in a short meeting. We are also likely to have the benefit of the participation of many highly-qualified experts. We must therefore carefully plan the meeting to ensure that all aspects of our topics are covered, and that experts are able to contribute effectively to our discussions in a structured and transparent manner. As an initial step towards developing a detailed programme of work for the meeting, I would suggest that we divide our two topics into the following sub-topics or themes:

Topic 1: National, regional and international measures to improve biosafety and biosecurity, including laboratory safety and security of pathogens and toxins

Themes: *Biosafety and biosecurity concepts and approaches*
 Capacity building
 Risk management

Topic 2: 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.

Themes: *Oversight of science*
 Education and awareness raising
 Codes of conduct

I would propose to allocate at least one three-hour session to each theme, and invite States Parties to prepare their presentations and interventions accordingly. Where appropriate and useful, we may also make use of specialist panel discussions.

Presenting national information

In my letter of 14 February, I suggested that States Parties help to optimise our use of time at the Meeting of Experts by submitting to the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) information on their relevant national activities for inclusion in an online *compendium of national activities*. This proposal has raised some questions among delegations, and I would like to clarify the situation.

First, I am not requesting any extra or additional information, or imposing any kind of reporting requirement on States Parties. I am suggesting only that the national information which States Parties would normally provide -- if they so wish -- to the Meeting of Experts in the form of working papers and Powerpoint presentations instead be provided in more concise form to the ISU in advance of the meeting, so that it can be efficiently shared with other States Parties. States Parties are of course still welcome to prepare more detailed working papers and make their presentations at the Meeting of Experts if they so wish.

Second, the role of the ISU in preparing the compendium will be strictly technical and no different from its role in preparing working papers, sharing information provided by States Parties, and facilitating communication among States Parties in accordance with its mandate. The ISU will simply receive any national information States Parties wish to submit, and will

make that information available online to other States Parties, just as it does with working papers and other documents. No change or expansion of the ISU's mandate is involved.

Third, the suggested deadline of 31 May 2008 for submission of information for the compendium is only a suggestion. States Parties are welcome to submit information at any time up to and during the Meeting of Experts: the ISU will update the compendium whenever new information is received. But, naturally, the earlier the information is provided, the more helpful it will be for our preparations.

Poster session

The response to the proposal for a poster session to allow experts to better interact with each other has been overwhelmingly positive, and I would therefore suggest that we proceed with the idea. I invite interested States Parties to ask their experts to prepare posters on their activities and fields of expertise relevant to our topics. Further details and information on display facilities, dimensions for posters, etc, are available from the Implementation Support Unit.

Sponsorship for participation

The ISU has received a further request from a State Party for assistance to participate in the Meeting of Experts. In the interests of broadening participation in our work, I again encourage States Parties who may be able to assist to contact the ISU.

Further consultations

I would like to consult again with the regional groups, and will ask the group coordinators to convene meetings at a convenient time in the coming weeks. I remain available for bilateral consultations at any time. The Implementation Support Unit is at your disposal for all administrative and technical enquiries, and I encourage you to check the ISU website regularly (<http://www.unog.ch/bwc>) for up-to-date information and announcements.

Thank you once again for your support, cooperation and constructive feedback, and I look forward to continuing to work together to ensure a productive meeting in August.

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

[Signed]

Georgi Avramchev
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of
the Republic of Macedonia
Chairman of the 2008 Biological Weapons Convention
Meeting of Experts and Meeting of States Parties