

**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, 6-10 December 2010

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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

25 February 2010

Excellency,

I am pleased to write to you in my capacity as Chairman of the 2010 meetings of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) 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 23-27 August 2010, and the Meeting of States Parties from 6-10 December 2010. As decided by the Sixth Review Conference, these meetings will discuss, and promote common understanding and effective action on our topic for 2010:

"Provision of assistance and coordination with relevant organizations upon request by any State Party in the case of alleged use of biological or toxin weapons, including improving national capabilities for disease surveillance, detection and diagnosis and public health systems."

This is an important topic that goes to the heart of key obligations in Article VII of the BWC to provide assistance to States Parties which are exposed to danger as a result of violations of the Convention. I believe that our work on this topic should be aimed at helping us to answer the fundamental practical question: *"if a biological weapon were to be used tomorrow, how would we, the States Parties, individually and collectively respond?"* Answering this question will involve a wide range of actors and considerations at the national, regional and international levels. We need to understand what is already being done in the field of emergency assistance nationally and internationally, and to identify areas requiring further development and coordination. I encourage all States Parties to begin thinking about the many factors that could usefully be brought into our discussion, and in particular about their own national response capacities.

This is the final year of the four-year intersessional work program established by the Sixth Review Conference in 2006. As such, we have a sound basis of successful meetings and accepted working practices on which to build. It is my intention to continue the successful pattern established by previous meetings, and to work closely with States Parties to ensure once more a productive consensus outcome that genuinely promotes effective action to strengthen the Convention.

As in previous years, I would propose to invite relevant organizations to participate in our work and share their experience and expertise. I attach a preliminary list of some of the more obviously

relevant organizations, and I would welcome your suggestions for others. The Implementation Support Unit will once again help us in our work by preparing background papers: the attachment lists the proposed topics for these. Suggestions for, and input to, the background papers are of course most welcome, and I encourage you to discuss your ideas for these directly with the ISU.

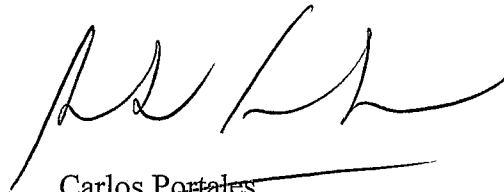
Another major focus of my activities this year will be **universalization**. No state has joined the BWC since 2008, and membership remains at 163 States Parties. We must act to change this. I will be writing to the foreign ministers of all states not party, to request an update on their intentions and progress towards accession. I also intend to focus on those states identified as being close to accession in the 2009 universalization report (BWC/MSP/2009/4), and on states in the South Pacific region. I urge individual States Parties to intensify their bilateral and regional contacts, and to inform the ISU of the results: sharing information will greatly amplify the effect of our individual efforts.

I would also like to take this opportunity to encourage all States Parties to participate in the Confidence-building Measures (CBMs), and to remind you that the **deadline for submission is 15 April 2010**. More information on the CBMs, including the necessary forms, can be found on the website of the Implementation Support Unit (<http://www.unog.ch/bwc/cbms>). In particular, I would like to draw your attention to the new *Guide to Participating in the Confidence-building Measures*, prepared by the ISU with the support of the European Union, which is available on the website. The ISU is available to answer any enquiries about the CBMs, and to help obtain any assistance your government might need for preparing CBMs.

Finally, I should mention that the Seventh Review Conference of the BWC will be held next year. Preparation for the Review Conference is not formally on our agenda for 2010, and is not part of my mandate as Chairman. Nevertheless, it is natural and welcome that States Parties should wish to start informal discussions on the Review Conference in the course of this year. I encourage delegations to consider holding seminars and other events to begin considering options for 2011, including on the margins of the Meeting of Experts and Meeting of States Parties.

I highly value your views on our work, and I will consult States Parties regularly throughout the year. I would propose to meet the regional groups in March to hear initial ideas and feedback, and to hold subsequent bilateral consultations at your convenience. I invite your input and suggestions on how best to make this year's activities useful to all current and future new members of the BWC. 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.



Carlos Portales
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Chile
Chairman of the Meeting of States Parties

Annex

Preliminary list of organizations to be invited to the Meeting of Experts

Public health/veterinary/agricultural capacity and response

- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- World Organization for Animal Health (OIE)

Humanitarian response and victim assistance

- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Criminal and technical investigation

- International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)
- UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (responsible for the UN Secretary-General's CBW investigation mechanism)
- Organization for the Prohibition of the Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

Background documents to be prepared by the Implementation Support Unit

These are provisional outlines: the title and contents of each document may be revised in the course of the ISU's research.

1. Previous agreements and understandings – detailing the relevant articles of the BWC (Articles V and VI in case of alleged use involving a State Party and Article VII on assistance in case of use) as well as any relevant texts from review conferences and common understandings from the 2004 Meeting of States Parties.

2. The role of international organizations in responding to alleged use – an outline of the current roles, responsibilities and activities of international organizations with respect to alleged use of biological weapons.

3. Technical guidance for responding to alleged use – a summary of the technical provisions of the UN Secretary-General's investigation mechanism, and relevant technical guidelines from WHO, OIE and FAO.
