

Biological Weapons Convention: Regional Group Meetings, 23-28 September 2011

President-designate's Speaking Notes

Eastern European Group: 10:00, Friday 23 September, Room I

Western Group: 11:00, Monday 26 September, Room IX

Group of NAM and Other States: 10:00, Wednesday 28 September, Room VII

Introduction

- Thank you for convening this meeting. This is just a brief opportunity for me to update delegations on preparations for the Review Conference, and to answer any questions you may have, before many of us leave for First Committee in New York.
- Preparations are proceeding smoothly, and I would like to thank delegations for their cooperation and support so far.
 - In particular, I would like to thank all delegations which have submitted information to the ISU for the background documents, and those which have already submitted working papers outlining specific proposals.
 - Although the official deadline has passed, it is still possible to submit information for the background documents, and I would certainly encourage delegations to do so. Working papers are of course welcome at any time.
- There are three things I would like to do in this meeting:
 - First, to give you an overview of the substantive issues that have so far emerged in the course of various informal meetings and workshops, and my own consultations with delegations.
 - Second, to provide some preliminary thoughts on how we might structure the work programme for the Review Conference.
 - Third, to hear any questions, comments, complaints, suggestions or other feedback you might have.

Overview of substantive issues

- Over the past months I have participated in several informal seminars and workshops in various countries, and have held a considerable number of bilateral consultations, including in capitals.
 - I would like to thank all those States Parties which have contributed to these meetings, kindly hosted me in their capitals, or otherwise found time to talk to me about their hopes and plans for the Review Conference.
- In the course of these consultations, a relatively coherent picture has emerged of the areas in which a result will be necessary if the Review Conference is to be considered a success. These are, very briefly:
 - the future of the intersessional process, the confidence-building measures, and the Implementation Support Unit;
 - the need for a means to monitor and assess developments in science and technology;

- strengthening international cooperation and assistance activities and the implementation of Article X;
- possibilities for compliance and verification; and
- universalization.
- There may be other issues that States Parties wish to raise, and they certainly are most welcome to do so. The agenda we agreed at the Preparatory Committee is sufficiently flexible to cover any issue that States Parties consider relevant.
 - But the issues that I have just listed seem to be those that are attracting most of the attention of States Parties, and I think are likely to account for much of the substantive outcome of the Conference.
- Some States Parties have already contributed working papers outlining specific proposals in several of these areas, and more are expected soon.
 - I encourage all delegations to study these proposals and to discuss them with the originators and with other delegations.
 - You might consider co-sponsoring those proposals you find appealing. Or, if you see problems, your critical feedback could help to refine and improve proposals, increasing their chances of gaining consensus. A third option is to put forward an alternative proposal yourself, giving States Parties another perspective and avenue of approaching the issue.
 - As I have done previously, I encourage you to look for common elements and potential synergies, rather than focusing on points of difference.
- As proposals emerge and are developed, I would like to reiterate my willingness to convene open-ended consultations on specific issues, if and when States Parties believe this would be useful.
- In addition to considering these specific issues, we will also of course have to deal with the article-by-article review of the Convention, examining each article in the light of developments over the past five years, and recording our collective determination on each.
 - As a starting point for preparing for this, I would suggest looking at the Final Declaration of the Sixth Review Conference and considering what elements might need to be added or changed.
- I would imagine that, as at the Sixth Review Conference, the substantive outcome would consist of an article-by-article review coupled with a forward-looking segment dealing with the sorts of specific issues I have mentioned.

Work programme for the Review Conference

- Earlier this year, three weeks for a Review Conference seemed like quite a long time, but now it is looking rather frighteningly short. We have a lot to do, and we will need to be highly organised, disciplined and focused if we are to do justice to the many important issues needing our attention.
- In consultation with delegations, I will be developing a formal programme of work over the next few weeks, for adoption by the Conference. I would like to share my initial ideas now, and would welcome your feedback.

- As is traditional, once we have dealt with the procedural formalities at the opening of the Conference, we will proceed to the General Debate, where any State Party wishing to make a general statement may do so.
 - Based on past experience, this is likely to take up the first two days of the Conference.
 - At the end of the General Debate, we will – in keeping with tradition – suspend the meeting to allow an opportunity for NGOs to address States Parties.
- We would then move on to the substantive work of the Conference, and my proposal would be to approach this in two parts.
 - First, the Committee of the Whole would convene to conduct the article-by-article review.
 - Second, we would meet in informal plenary to discuss the various specific issues, as these are generally cross-cutting in nature and do not fit under a particular article.
 - Work in these two settings should proceed in parallel, to ensure coordination and cross-fertilization. For example, we could hold meetings of the Committee of the Whole in the mornings, and informal plenaries in the afternoons, or vice-versa.
- Once work in these two settings has reached a certain stage, we could consider convening the Drafting Committee, or perhaps assigning pieces of the emerging text to facilitators for further development.
 - I suggest we remain flexible on this, and I will be relying on my colleagues in the Bureau for guidance and advice. I will of course keep all States Parties fully informed as the Conference proceeds.
- One other suggestion I would like to make, based on requests from States Parties and others, is to set aside some time in the first week for a poster session and for a discussion panel featuring industry representatives.
 - These are both elements that were used in the intersessional process and proved popular and useful.
 - They would be held in informal session, and I think would contribute significantly to informing our deliberations.

Practical matters

- Before I hand over to you for questions and comments, I would like to ask the Head of the ISU, Richard Lennane, who has just been nominated as provisional Secretary-General of the Review Conference, to brief you on a couple of practical matters.

Conclusion

- Thank you. That is all I wanted to say. Let me emphasize again that I am always available for consultations, with individual delegations or groups, in Geneva or in New York, and in forthcoming regional meetings in Lima and Belgrade.
 - I will be conducting various consultations in New York during First Committee, including an important meeting with representatives of states not party, with the kind support and involvement of the Depositary Governments. I mention that as a

reminder not to forget to continue your own efforts on universality, and to keep the ISU informed.

- Now I would like to hear from you: your views, comments, questions and feedback – on the substantive issues, the work programme, or any other aspect of preparations for the Conference.
 - I remain confident that we are on track to deliver a strong consensus outcome that embodies *ambitious realism* and genuinely strengthens the BWC.
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