

Biological Weapons Convention: Regional Group Meetings February 2011

President-designate's Speaking Notes

Eastern European Group: 15:00, Thursday 17 February 2011, Room V

Western Group: 11:30, Wednesday 23 February 2011, Room XI

Group of NAM and Other States: 10:00, Friday 25 February 2011, Room XXIII

Introduction

- This meeting is a follow-up to my letter to States Parties of 25 January (available on the ISU website), and an initial opportunity to exchange views on preparations for the Seventh Review Conference.
- As I said in my letter, I am committed to working closely with all States Parties in a transparent, inclusive and constructive manner in order to secure a positive outcome at the Review Conference.
 - I want to work together with you all to find the right balance between **ambition** and **realism**.
 - The collegial spirit and constructive collaboration of States Parties over the four years of the intersessional process have built a sound foundation for the Review Conference: we should capitalise on this.
- Today I would like to go over the arrangements for the Preparatory Committee, then make some more general comments, and then I would like to hear your views on any aspect of preparations, both substantive or procedural, for the Review Conference.

Preparatory Committee

- The PrepCom will be held over the three days Wednesday 13 to Friday 15 April 2011. The Monday and Tuesday prior are available for side-events and informal consultations.
- In keeping with past practice, the PrepCom will be a procedural meeting. Its purpose is to ensure that the necessary procedural mechanisms are in place for a thorough review of the Convention during the Review Conference itself.
 - Attached to the above-mentioned letter, I have circulated a provisional agenda for the PrepCom, which is essentially identical to the one from 2006. It covers all the necessary procedural matters.
- As the PrepCom is a procedural rather than substantive meeting, there is no general debate. However, if groups or individual States Parties would like to make statements of general nature, there are two opportunities:
 - If the statements touch on several specific aspects of the organization of the Review Conference, these could be made at the start of agenda item 5. That is, before we get into the detail of the sub-items.
 - If the statements concern substantive proposals, or desires for the outcome of the Review Conference, I would suggest they be made under agenda item 9, once we have concluded all the procedural arrangements.
- One of the main tasks of the PrepCom will be to develop and recommend an agenda for the Review Conference. I have suggested that the agenda of the successful Sixth

Review Conference could be a good starting point for this (copies of this agenda are available in the room).

- One possible modification would be to add an item covering the specific issues that the Sixth Review Conference decided that the Seventh would consider: scientific and technological developments, the outcome of the intersessional process, the CBMs, and the future of the ISU, for example.
- I would welcome your views on what the agenda should include. But I would caution against trying to use the agenda to pre-empt the outcome of discussion by giving particular priority or prominence to one issue or another.
- Our aim should be to ensure that States Parties have the opportunity to discuss fully all issues which they believe are relevant to the objectives and operation of the Convention.
- Another important issue for the PrepCom will be deciding on the background documents we request from the Implementation Support Unit in order to inform our preparations.
 - The list of background documents requested in 2006 was attached to my letter: we can consider whether all of these are still relevant, or if there are others we should add.
 - The background paper on compliance may be one that needs attention and review. In the past it has been a simple compilation of submissions from States Parties, of widely varying format and detail. Do States Parties find this useful, or should we look at another approach?

Preparations for the Review Conference

- I would again like to emphasise that the success of the Review Conference will depend on early preparation and sharing of proposals.
- I warmly welcome the various informal seminars and consultations that have been held to date, but such discussions can take us only so far without concrete proposals on which to focus.
 - I encourage States Parties, individually and in groups, to put forward specific proposals for discussion as soon as possible.
 - The ISU's website is a convenient way to share ideas and proposals with a wide audience, and to invite reactions and discussion.
- Many States Parties are eager to make significant progress in areas such as a new or revised intersessional process, an improved ISU, better implementation of Article X cooperation and assistance activities, more regular and structured assessment of science and technology, and monitoring of compliance, among others.
 - Such progress may require new administrative structures and financial arrangements. These take time to assess and prepare.
 - We should make every effort to ensure that we have all the necessary information available to us when we begin our deliberations in December.

Universalization and CBMs

- As I said in my letter, as we prepare for the Review Conference we must not neglect our regular commitments under the Convention, notably on universalisation and on the confidence-building measures.
 - As President-designate I will be undertaking a range of initiatives to raise the profile of the Convention among states not party and to encourage them to join. I ask you to redouble your own efforts in this area, and to keep me informed.
 - Please remember the deadline of 15 April for submission of your CBM. The ISU can help if you need any advice or assistance with preparing your CBM submission.

Conclusion

- We are starting a long and challenging journey together. I am looking forward to this journey and I am confident that if we maintain the constructive approach and collaborative atmosphere of previous years the journey will be successful and we will reach our final destination..
 - This is a common, collective undertaking: the success of the Review Conference lies in the hands of all States Parties, not just the President.
 - I want to hear your views and ideas, I am flexible in my approach, and I am committed to full consultation and consensus as we move forward.
 - I am eager to listen to your comments and ideas now, and of course I am also happy to meet delegations bilaterally for consultations at any time.
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