I think it is fair to say that we have had a focused, positive and constructive meeting. We have heard a huge range of material related to our topic of promoting capacity building in the areas of disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis and containment. Participation in the meeting has been impressively broad: 95 States Parties were represented, and just under 500 delegates participated in the meeting. Of these, around 190 were experts who had travelled from capitals. This is an excellent result, and demonstrates both the wide relevance of our topic this year and the utility of the intersessional work program.

In fact, our topic could hardly be more timely and relevant. The H1N1 influenza pandemic is highlighting the crucial importance of building international and national capacities for disease surveillance and response. Only yesterday the FAO announced that it has detected H1N1 influenza in poultry. One of the things that made the 1918 influenza so much more serious than other strains was conformational characteristics coming together from human, swine and avian strains in just the wrong way. Undoubtedly, this latest species jump for H1N1 will have implications for our efforts to deal with this disease. Enhanced international coordination and strengthened national systems will be more important than ever, and our work here this week represents a modest but practical contribution to this global effort.

We have heard a wide range of perspectives, from a variety of agencies in both developed and developing countries, from international and regional organisations, from informal initiatives and networks, from academia and NGOs, and from the private sector. We have heard about existing activities, past projects and future plans. We have heard about resources available, assistance extended, cooperation undertaken, and opportunities waiting. And just as importantly, we have heard about needs and challenges, shortfalls in capacity and resources, and obstacles and difficulties in coordination, cooperation and development.

I would like to thank all of you who have contributed to our discussion, whether through presentations, statements or questions. We have enjoyed some very positive interaction, both here in the room, and on the margins, in the corridors, in the coffee lounge, and over lunches and dinners. This blend of formal and informal interaction among experts is one of the great benefits of the intersessional work programme. The poster session proved once again to be a great success as a means of developing greater interaction and exchange among
experts. I hope some of the contacts made and informal discussions held this week will lead to the development of new avenues of cooperation for capacity building, and indeed to new and more effective assistance projects on the ground.

Although we have heard a great number of perspectives this week, there are a few common themes that ran through many of the presentations and working papers. One was the need for sustainability: if we are to build enduring capacity, we need to do more than just provide resources and equipment. We need an integrated approach that involves both the donor and recipient in making the necessary decisions and investment in planning, training and long-term commitment.

Another common theme was the need for an integrated approach to human, animal and plant diseases, pooling information and resources, and coordinating efforts and institutions. I was particularly struck by the FAO presentation on plant diseases, and the terrible lack of resources and attention applied to this field. Greater integration with efforts on human and animal diseases may help to remedy this, but it clearly an area which would benefit from greater attention, both in the BWC and in other forums.

Perhaps the most commonly emphasised theme this week was the need to coordinate assistance, cooperation and capacity building activities – nationally, regionally and internationally. There is clearly a lot of very positive activity across the world, undertaken by a wide range of actors, aimed at building capacity in disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis and containment. But there is evidently great scope for better coordination of these activities, greater sharing of information, and improved integration in planning, implementation and follow-up.

Finally, we heard many statements and presentations outlining specific needs and requirements, as well as those that offered assistance and cooperation. I thank all those delegations which spoke openly and candidly about the challenges they face, and which listed their needs in a thoughtful, structured and realistic manner. I also thank those who extended specific offers of assistance, and who provided examples of projects aimed at building capacity. I hope that this Meeting will lead to a successful matching of at least some of these requests and offers.

For the Meeting of States Parties in December, I will be writing to all delegations to outline my plans, and will consult closely in the coming months. As in previous years, I will prepare a synthesis paper that distills the essence of the many ideas and proposals we have annexed to our report. As I have said in
the past, I think it is important that the Meeting of States Parties produces an outcome that is of practical assistance to States Parties in their efforts in capacity building for disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis and containment. In particular, the outcome should be of practical assistance to those States Parties which are not able to participate in our meetings. The States Parties which participate in our meetings gain significant benefit from the interaction and exchange of information, and would benefit even if the meeting produced no report at all. But we must keep in mind the interests and needs of the entire membership of the Convention, especially the smaller States Parties which are often those most in need of assistance and encouragement. For this reason, a substantive outcome encapsulating our work and collective wisdom is very important.

That is what I wanted to say by way of conclusion. Let me finish by thanking all delegations for their cooperation and support. I was pleased to note the many acknowledgements of the valuable role and work of the Implementation Support Unit. I add my own thanks to the ISU and its staff – Mr. Richard Lennane, Mr. Piers Millett and Ms. Phuong Huynh, as well as the ISU intern Mr. Eben Lindsey – for their hard work and thorough preparation for this meeting. I urge all States Parties to continue to work closely with the ISU, to make the most of this important resource for the Convention.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who work to support our meeting, in the room and behind the scenes. Let me thank our interpreters, who have dealt most admirably with some highly technical material. I would also like to thank our conference room officers: Mr. Dubouchet, Mr. Sedik, Mr. Ganbold, Mr. Kis, Mr. Mwangi and Mr. Benatia; our documents distribution officer Ms. Thambryrajah; our secretaries: Ms. Nicole Mercier and Ms. Pauline Glaser; and our documents officer, Ms. Norma Roulin; as well as all those who help to run the machinery of our meeting so smoothly.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, that concludes our business here. Thank you all, once again, for your cooperation, your support, and your active and constructive participation. We will meet again in Geneva on 7 December 2009 for the Meeting of States Parties.

The 2009 Meeting of Experts is closed.