

**Biological Weapons Convention: Regional Group Meetings  
Monday 8 February 2016**

**President-designate's Speaking Notes**

*Council Chamber:*

- *Western Group: 14:00*
- *Eastern European Group: 15:00*
- *Group of NAM and Other States: 16:00*

Introduction

- I extend my appreciation to the Regional Coordinator for convening this meeting and to all Representatives for their support over the course of what will be a very busy year for the BWC.
- This meeting is a follow-up to my letter to States Parties of 27 January (available on the BWC website), and is an initial opportunity to exchange views on preparations for the Eighth Review Conference.
- As I emphasized in my letter, let me re-assure you that I will perform my duties in good faith and in the most balanced, transparent and inclusive manner possible.
- As you are all aware, the MSP in December agreed upon an innovative approach to the preparations for this year's Review Conference. While many familiar elements remain, we also need to consider the new elements and how we will handle them in the coming months.
- Today I would like to go over the arrangements for the Preparatory Committee which will take place in April, and then make some more general comments. I am particularly keen to hear your views on any aspect of preparations, both substantive and procedural, for the Preparatory Committee and the Review Conference.

Preparatory Committee, 26-27 April 2016

- Traditionally, the Preparatory Committee's role is to ensure that the necessary procedural mechanisms are in place for a thorough review of the Convention during the Review Conference itself. As you know States Parties decided in December to establish a preparatory process dealing with both procedural and substantial issues related the review of the Convention and its implementation.
- The first session of the PrepCom is scheduled to be held in Geneva for up to two days from 26 to 27 April, the Preparatory Committee will then resume its work during 8 to 12 August.
- Our formal meeting time in April will be short, so delegations may consider holding informal meetings, seminars or workshops in the days before and after the meeting. In case of larger meetings, please coordinate with the ISU. I will be available here in Geneva during the entire week from 25 to 29 April and will be prepared to meet States Parties in any appropriate format.
- The Preparatory Committee in April will need to take decisions on such matters as the election of the Chairman and other officers, the adoption of its agenda and the organization of its work. In this regard, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage the regional groups to give early thought to their nominations for the Vice-Chairmen of

the PrepCom. Following precedent and regional group rotation from previous Review Conferences, the Vice-Chairman from the Western Group will become the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole at the Review Conference, and the Vice-Chairman from the NAM and Others Group will become the Chairman of the Drafting Committee. In addition to these procedural items, the MSP decided that the April meeting would also conduct a general exchange of views and that it would also address the organization of the Review Conference (provisional agenda for the Review Conference, the draft rules of procedure, background documentation, publicity, and various other procedural and administrative items).

- I have prepared a suggested provisional agenda for the Preparatory Committee, covering both the April and August meetings, which was Annex A of my 27 January letter. The suggested agenda is almost identical to that used in 2011. The agenda is a necessary procedural element of our proceedings and will need to be adopted at the meeting in April. Items 1 through to 4 are purely procedural and need to be approved in order to be able to conduct our business in the Preparatory Committee.
- Regarding the general exchange of views (agenda item 5 of Annex A), I encourage States Parties to develop and circulate proposals and ideas to be presented under this item prior to the April meeting. The last MSP already saw several proposals being put forward by States Parties and I imagine that others will also be developed in the coming months. The meeting in April will be a valuable opportunity for States Parties to present and discuss such proposals, although this does not preclude the later submission of such proposals.
- Regarding the agenda item on the organization of the Review Conference (agenda item 6 of Annex A), we will need to return to consideration of the various sub-items at the meeting in August, but we should have an initial consideration of them in April. With regard to items 6(b) and (c), I will prepare a provisional agenda for the Review Conference and the draft rules of procedure for consideration in April on the understanding that especially the provisional agenda can be further discussed at the meeting in August.
- Another important issue for the PrepCom will be deciding on the background documentation that we request from the ISU in order to inform our preparations. As a guide for your consideration, the list of eight background documents requested by the Preparatory Committee for the Seventh Review Conference in 2011 was attached as Annex B to my letter.
- It would be useful if the April meeting of the Preparatory Committee could provide guidance as to which background documentation will be required, in order for the ISU to have sufficient time to prepare the requested documents. However, this does not preclude requests for additional background papers at the PrepCom in August. If States Parties have proposals for additions or changes to this list, I would encourage them to be shared as soon as possible.
- I would suggest that at the conclusion of the April meeting, we adopt an interim / preliminary report which merely notes the administrative decisions taken and records the participation of States Parties. A full PrepCom report will be adopted by the August meeting.
- As decided by the MSP, the meeting in August will also provide an opportunity for States Parties to consider comprehensively all provisions of the Convention, included as agenda item 7 of Annex A.
- An additional point relating to the August meeting on which I would like to seek your views relates to the participation of NGOs. In the past, there has not been an informal session for NGOs at PrepComs as they have been purely procedural in nature. Given that

we have agreed a different preparatory process this time, I am of the view that we could have an informal session for NGO statements at the August meeting, but I would like to hear your views on this matter.

- Finally, let me underline that although the substantive part of the preparatory process will allow delegations to present proposals and state initial positions enabling us to have a head start at the beginning of the Review Conference, the decision-making powers of the Review Conference will be fully respected and safeguarded.
- I would be keen to hear your views on the elements that I have just outlined.

#### Preparations for the Review Conference

- Moving on to the Review Conference itself, I would again like to emphasise that its success will depend on early preparation and sharing of proposals.
- I encourage States Parties, individually and in groups, to put forward specific proposals for discussion as soon as possible prior to the first session of the PrepCom. The BWC website is a convenient way to share ideas and proposals with a wide audience, and to invite reactions and discussion.
- I would also encourage States Parties and groups of States Parties to consider the convening of conferences, workshops and seminars on the topics to be discussed at the Review Conference. Several such events took place prior to the Seventh Review Conference and were widely appreciated by delegations.
- Finally, as we heard at the MSP, while many States Parties want to participate actively in the PrepCom and the Review Conference itself, they are hampered by resource constraints. In response, several States Parties announced that they may consider providing financial support through the BWC Sponsorship Programme, or other instruments. The ISU has already been approached in this regard by some States Parties, and I would strongly encourage any other States Parties in a position to provide support to contact the ISU as soon as possible to make the process as efficient and predictable as possible.

#### 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.
- I would like 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 2016. A record number of 72 States Parties submitted CBMs in 2015, and I hope that we can further increase this number this year. The ISU can help if you need any advice or assistance with preparing your CBM submission.
- Finally with regard to routine matters, I would like to remind all States Parties to pay their assessed contributions to the BWC budget at their earliest convenience after receiving the invoices from the United Nations.

## Conclusion

- The adoption by the MSP in December of an innovative preparatory process clearly indicated that there is a high level of commitment to our common goal of a successful outcome to the Review Conference in November. I stand ready to facilitate our work towards this goal, so that the BWC can emerge from the Review Conference further strengthened and on a firm basis to face the future.
- Before starting to exchange views, let me briefly give the floor to Daniel, who would like to make a few administrative remarks.

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