Illustrative model intersessional work programme: 
a proposal for task group structure and agenda items

Submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

I. Introduction

1. There are several different ways in which a new intersessional process could be organised – much depends on the topics to be addressed and time and resources the States Parties are prepared to allocate annually to expert and other meetings. It is however clear to us that there is limited value in repeating the approach taken in the first two intersessional programmes, or in simply addressing the same topics in the same way. Particular weaknesses have been the absence of a coherent and continuing review of issues relevant to the Convention throughout the intersessional process. We envisage a new process with the establishment of Task Groups that preserves the benefits of the previous programmes whilst taking a more purposeful and strategic approach.

2. The UK believes that there are three main areas that should form the basis for a new intersessional work programme that can consider topics in a more action oriented fashion, whilst keeping them under review throughout the next intersessional period:

   (a) national implementation (broadly defined to include issues such as biosafety, biosecurity and CBMs);
   (b) cooperation and assistance – Articles VII and X; and,
   (c) science and technology.

3. We envisage a potential wide range of relevant topics that could be addressed under each heading either each year in the four year cycle, or as decided by individual Task Groups that would be charged to take the work forward in a new intersessional process. These topics could be selected and organised as follows:

A. Task Group 1: National Implementation

   Agenda Item 1: to review progress being made in implementing Articles III and IV;
   Agenda Item 2: to identify/coordinate assistance needed/offered with implementing Articles III and IV (to identify problems and possible solutions on drafting and implementing penal and export control legislation);
   Agenda Item 3: to consider progress on improving biosafety and biosecurity and to identify/coordinate assistance on these issues;
   Agenda Item 4: to consider additional ways of strengthening the CBM regime; to review the CBM process, including levels of annual returns and their quality; and to address any ambiguities and uncertainties in CBM submissions.
   Agenda Item 5: discussion of draft report contribution to the Plenary.
B. **Task Group 2: Cooperation and Assistance:**

Agenda Item 1: to consider activities that implement Article X, including the roles played by all States Parties and international organisations, with particular reference to combating infectious diseases of humans, animals and plants;

Agenda Item 2: to identify critical gaps that need to be addressed in these areas; and to act as a catalyst for action by the relevant lead international organisations.

Agenda Item 3: to consider the practical implementation of Article VII and its relationship to activities undertaken by the WHO, OIE and FAO.

Agenda Item 4: review reports by ISU and States Parties on their implementation of Article X.

Agenda Item 5: discussion of draft report contribution to the Plenary

C. **Task Group 3: Science and Technology**

Agenda Item 1: to review and report on developments that have implications for the Convention, including Articles I, III, IV, VI, VII and X;

Agenda Item 2: to identify any actions that may be appropriate by the States Parties;

Agenda Item 3: to consider and promote BTWC awareness raising and education in the scientific community;

Agenda Item 4: to review oversight issues for scientific and technological developments;

Agenda Item 5: to consider the implications of the convergence of chemistry and biology and of the multidisciplinary approach taken in rapidly developing fields such as synthetic biology and nanotechnologies.

Agenda Item 6: discussion of draft report contribution to the Plenary

II. **Modalities: how the process would work**

A. **Function of the Task Leaders**

4. Each Task Group would have a dedicated Task Group Leader who would remain in post, ideally for the whole period of the four year intersessional programme. Task Leaders would be selected by the Regional Groups and the Review Conference would decide on allocation of roles. Continuity is important and Task Leaders need not always be based in Geneva. Appointment of two deputies might also be considered to provide support and cross-regional engagement in all of the issues. A nominated ISU member would serve as a permanent secretary for each Task Group.

5. Each Task Leader could each serve in annual rotation as Chair of the Annual Meeting of States Parties. (This paper also sets out a streamlined model for the annual meeting – see paragraph 9 below). Alternatively a new Chair could be appointed for each year. The Review Conference would agree the mandate or terms of reference, basic structure and the topics to be addressed in each Task Group; precisely how the agenda in each group would be carried forward annually would be for each Task Leader to decide in consultation with the States Parties and ISU. If rather more or less time were required for each issue in light of requirements, then the MXP and MSP meetings could agree to change the time allocation for particular topics. A Task Leader would be free to appoint Friends of
the Task Leader to assist in taking forward discrete items in the Group agendas. Papers and presentations will be commissioned in good time before the next meeting and delegations invited to comment at least one month before the meeting.

6. The Task Groups should focus on action, which could entail regular reporting on progress in implementing obligations; follow-up on requirements and recommendations/key points from previous intersessional rounds; discussion of problems and possible solutions; recommendations for agreed actions to be completed by States Parties by specified dates; review of actions taken by other international organisations relevant to the topic(s) in hand; and identifying opportunities for cooperation and collaboration on advancing specific agenda items.

B. Reporting

7. Each Task Group would submit an agreed report of its activities to an Annual Meeting of the States Parties held at the end of the year, which would decide on any recommendations that might emerge from the Task Groups. The Annual Meeting could also agree to change the mandates of the groups if a pressing need to do so emerged or to allocate new topics to be addressed by a Task Group. It might even establish a new Task Group too should agreement prove possible. The chair of these States Parties’ meetings would rotate as now between the three regional groups.

C. Organisational and timetable

8. An illustrative timetable is in the annex. This envisages an annual two-week expert meeting with issues addressed sequentially so that States Parties need only send relevant experts for a few days rather than the entire period. Parallel meetings might also be considered, but this raises issues for smaller delegations. Consensus rules would apply as per the previous round of intersessional. The agenda items are flexible and the Task Groups may propose changes/deletions/additions. An informal body consisting of representatives from the regional groups in Geneva with Task Leaders/Chairs of Annual Meetings and the head of the ISU might meet periodically to address administrative, organisational and timing issues. It would be useful to invite The Review Conference President/Designate to attend meetings and also the Depositaries where the latter had a formal role in any matters being discussed.

D. Role of the annual Meeting of States Parties (MSP)

9. We must ensure that the MSP adds value to the process and does not just end up repeating work done at the expert level; its function should be to act upon any recommendations and provide strategic guidance to the work of the Task Groups in the coming year(s). If recommendations for action emerge that require an MSP response, then we should allocate one week in order to give such issues proper attention. Each Task Group Leader would report on the Group’s activities and on any recommendations for decision or further consideration. One session would be devoted to general issues such as annual reports on ISU activities, universalisation and whether any major changes are needed to the work programe consistent with any agreed decision making authorities allocated to the MSP by the Review Conference. It may be possible to complete business in three rather than five days, but it would be prudent to allow for the customary five days in the disarmament calendar to facilitate planning. An illustration of how a meeting might function is also included.
E. Role of outside expertise: academia, industry, international non-governmental organisations and other bodies

10. As in the earlier intersessional meetings, there is considerable value in having participation by representatives from intergovernmental or international non-governmental organisations, industry, academia and NGOs. Individual Task Leaders would decide on invitations in light of the subjects under discussion and where external contributions and expertise would be valuable. However, some delegations might be unwilling to accept such participation in all meetings. The norm might therefore be that meetings are open, unless otherwise decided according to the topic under discussion in the agenda.
Annex

### Illustrative timetables

#### 1. Expert level meetings (new Meeting of Experts)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week One</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session</strong></td>
<td><strong>Task Group 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Task Group 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Task Group 1</strong></td>
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<td>10:00–13:00</td>
<td>Agenda Item 1</td>
<td>Agenda Item 4</td>
<td>Agenda Item 5</td>
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<td><strong>Session</strong></td>
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<td>15:00–18:00</td>
<td>Agenda Item 3</td>
<td>Agenda Item 4</td>
<td>Agenda Item 1</td>
<td>Agenda Item 4</td>
<td>Agenda Item 5</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week Two</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Task Group 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Task Group 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Overflow for Task Groups</strong></td>
<td><strong>Plenary</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00–13:00</td>
<td>Plenary for any general remarks, issues</td>
<td>Agenda Item 3</td>
<td>Agenda Item 5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session</strong></td>
<td><strong>Task Group 3</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Overflow for Task Groups</strong></td>
<td><strong>Plenary</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>15:00–18:00</td>
<td>Agenda Item 1</td>
<td>Agenda Item 5</td>
<td>Agenda Item 6</td>
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* The overflow periods are to allow time for informal consultations over drafting of report sections for overall Session report and any additional meetings to enable completion of the agenda. There might also be a need for parallel sessions with relevant experts in week one should there be any issues requiring attention – most likely days being Thursday AM. The Task Leaders would consult as required with each other and delegations.

#### 2. Annual Meeting of States Parties

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<tr>
<th>Session</th>
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<tr>
<td>10:00–13:00</td>
<td>Reporting Task Group 1</td>
<td>Reporting Task Group 2</td>
<td>Reporting Task Group 3</td>
<td>General BTWC business, including ISU reports and universality</td>
<td>Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:00–18:00</td>
<td>Reporting Task Group 1</td>
<td>Reporting Task Group 2</td>
<td>Reporting Task Group 3</td>
<td>Report</td>
<td>Report</td>
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