

**EIGHTH REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE STATES
PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION
OF THE DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCTION AND
STOCKPILING OF BACTERIOLOGICAL (BIOLOGICAL)
AND TOXIN WEAPONS AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION**

Geneva, 7-25 November 2016

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To the Permanent Representatives of the States Parties
and Signatories to the Convention on the Prohibition
of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological
(Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction

27 January 2016

Excellency,

I am writing to you in my capacity as President-designate of the Eighth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) to outline my plans for preparing for the Conference and to request your input and participation in these preparations.

Let me begin by thanking you for your support for my nomination as President of the Conference and Chairman of the Preparatory Committee. Rest assured that I will perform my duties in good faith and in the most balanced, transparent and inclusive manner, and also in the spirit of last year's UNGA resolution on the BWC which was adopted by consensus.

Our first task is to make arrangements for the Preparatory Committee, the first session of which is scheduled to be held in Geneva for up to two days from 26 to 27 April 2016. The Preparatory Committee would then resume its work during 8 to 12 August 2016.

The Preparatory Committee is to ensure that the necessary procedural mechanisms are in place for a thorough review of the Convention during the Review Conference itself. The Preparatory Committee will need to take decisions on such matters as the provisional agenda for the Review Conference, the rules of procedure, background documentation, publicity, and various other procedural and administrative items. However, in addition to these procedural items, the Meeting of States Parties decided that a general exchange of views would take place at the meeting in April, and that the meeting in August would provide an opportunity for States Parties to consider comprehensively all provisions of the Convention.

I have prepared the attached draft agenda covering both sessions of the Preparatory Committee (see Annex A), which 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. The first new element in the agenda is item 5. I encourage States Parties to develop and circulate proposals and ideas to be discussed under this item prior to the first session of the Preparatory Committee. The last Meeting of States Parties 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. As was

done before the Seventh Review Conference, the ISU has set up a “think zone” on the BWC website (www.unog.ch/bwc/rc8) where a number of papers and articles have already been made available. I hope States Parties will contribute their own material to this “think zone”.

In April, following this general exchange of views, we must then consider the organization of the Review Conference itself (agenda item 6) with the understanding that no final decisions will be taken in April on the issues under consideration. The ISU will prepare a draft provisional agenda for the Review Conference, as well as draft rules of procedure but we will return to this item, and consider the remaining items (7 through to 11) at the resumed meeting from 8 to 12 August. At this time, we will need to take decisions on the items in question, in particular the provisional agenda for the Review Conference. I would suggest that the agenda of the Seventh Review Conference would be a useful starting point for this.

Regarding agenda item 6(d) on background documentation, the ISU has informed me that 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. As a guide for your consideration, I attach as Annex B the list of eight background documents requested by the Preparatory Committee for the Seventh Review Conference in 2011. If States Parties have proposals for additions or changes to this list, I would encourage them to be shared as soon as possible.

Our time in April will be short, so I would encourage delegations to consider holding informal meetings because, even with the most meticulous implementation of the decision of the Meeting of the States Parties on the arrangements for the preparatory process, our preparations could not be called sufficient without parallel informal consultations. Since the first session of the Preparatory Committee itself will be held from Tuesday to Wednesday, 26-27 April, the Monday, Thursday and Friday of that week are available for regional group meetings and other consultations. While bilateral and small-group consultations can of course be held at any time, I would suggest that any larger meetings or seminars be coordinated with the ISU to avoid clashes and to make the best use of time for all delegations. I will also be in Geneva on those days and will be prepared to conduct informal consultations.

In conclusion 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.

Finally, although we are all naturally focused on the Review Conference, it is important to remember that we must also continue with the routine implementation of the Convention, and with efforts to boost its membership. I would therefore like to take this opportunity 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. More information on the CBMs, including the necessary forms, can be found on the BWC website at www.unog.ch/bwc/cbms I also ask you to continue your efforts to contact States not party to the Convention and to persuade them to join. I hope that a number of States that are close to joining the BWC will complete their domestic processes during the course of this year, so that they are able to participate fully in the Review Conference in November.

I value your views and suggestions and, although I am not based in Geneva, I intend to visit regularly for consultations. I plan to meet the regional groups in Geneva on 8 February for an initial discussion. Please also feel free to contact me directly or via my delegation in Geneva (contact details are attached as Annex C). The Implementation Support Unit is also at your disposal for any enquiries of a technical and administrative nature, and I encourage you to consult the BWC website for up-to-date information and documentation.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Ambassador Dr György Molnár
Special Representative for Arms Control,
Disarmament and Non-Proliferation of
Hungary
President-designate of the Eighth Review
Conference

Attachments

Annex A: Suggested agenda for the Preparatory Committee (1 page)

Annex B: Background documents requested in 2011 (1 page)

Annex C: Contact details (1 page)

Annex A

Suggested provisional agenda for the Preparatory Committee

**Eighth Review Conference of the States Parties
to the Convention on the Prohibition of the
Development, Production and Stockpiling
of Bacteriological (Biological) and
Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction
Geneva, 7-25 November 2016**

**Preparatory Committee
Geneva, 26-27 April and 8-12 August 2016**

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Election of the Chairman and other officers
3. Adoption of the agenda of the Preparatory Committee
4. Organization of work of the Preparatory Committee:
 - (a) Method of decision-making
 - (b) Languages
 - (c) Participation of non-States Parties
5. General exchange of views
6. Organization of the Review Conference:
 - (a) Date and duration
 - (b) Provisional agenda
 - (c) Draft rules of procedure
 - (d) Background documentation
 - (e) Publicity
 - (f) Final document(s)
7. Comprehensive consideration of all provisions of the Convention
8. Appointment of a provisional Secretary-General
9. Financial arrangements for the Preparatory Committee and the Review Conference
10. Report of the Preparatory Committee to the Review Conference
11. Other business

Annex B

Background documents requested by the Preparatory Committee in 2011

(excerpt from the Report of the Preparatory Committee, BWC/CONF.VII/PC/2)

“24. The Preparatory Committee decided to request the Implementation Support Unit to prepare eight background information documents as follows:

(a) A background information document on the history and operation of the confidence-building measures agreed at the Second Review Conference and revised at the Third Review Conference. The document should include data in summary tabular form on the participation of States Parties in the measures since the last Review Conference;

(b) A background information document on compliance by States Parties with all their obligations under the Convention, to be compiled from information submitted by States Parties;

(c) A background information document on new scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention, to be compiled from information submitted by States Parties as well as from information provided by relevant international organisations;

(d) A background information document on developments since the last Review Conference in other international organizations which may be relevant to the Convention;

(e) A background information document showing the additional understandings and agreements reached by previous Review Conferences relating to each article of the Convention, extracted from the respective Final Declarations of these conferences;

(f) A background information document showing the common understandings reached by the Meetings of States Parties during the intersessional programme held from 2007 to 2010;

(g) A background information document on the status of universalization of the Convention;

(h) A background information document on the implementation of Article X, to be compiled from information submitted by States Parties, including information submitted pursuant to paragraph 54 of the Final Declaration of the Sixth Review Conference.”

Annex C

Contact details for the President-designate

President-designate of the Review Conference

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