Delegations will recall that the Sixth Review Conference agreed that the Chairs of the Meetings of States Parties would coordinate universalization activities, address states not party to the Convention, and provide an annual report on universalization activities at Meetings of States Parties. As has become traditional, I will provide an interim report at this Meeting of Experts, in order to guide and encourage States Parties in their efforts to promote universalization between now and the Meeting of States Parties in December.

I am sorry that I am not able to report any new accessions since the Meeting of States Parties last December. The number of States Parties remains at 163, with the Cook Islands being our newest member. But this is not for lack of trying: I am pleased to report that efforts on universality have been underway in various quarters over the past months, and it seems reasonable to expect that these efforts will result in further accessions, possibly by the end of the year.

First, the ISU and I have launched a coordinated campaign to increase membership among the Pacific island states. I wrote to the foreign ministers of these states urging them to accede, and in April Ms. Ngoc Phuong Huynh of the ISU travelled to a regional meeting in Vanuatu (a particularly tough assignment) to campaign on the spot. These states are of course very small, and have many other pressing priorities, so it seems that in most cases it is a matter of getting the right official to find time to give sufficient time and attention to the BWC. I am hopeful that we will see further progress in this region, and I understand that New Zealand may be preparing further work over the coming months to encourage accession. Thank you for that, and we look forward to hearing the results in due course.

Second, we have indications from several states in Africa that accessions or ratifications may be imminent. I understand from Cameroon that the necessary internal process is complete, and that all that is required now is a signature from the President. But this has been the case for some months, so I wonder if States Parties from the region might consider high-level approaches to the office of the President of Cameroon to push for this final step. In any case, I am pleased that Cameroon is participating in this Meeting of Experts, and I thank our Cameroonian colleagues here for all their efforts to prepare for accession.

Mozambique and Comoros are similar cases: we had understood that the domestic processes were essentially complete, but movement appears to have stopped. I encourage States Parties to continue their contacts with these
countries to help them take the final steps. Finally, I understand from Tanzania – which has sent a sizable delegation to our Meeting here – that the ratification process is well advanced. I hope that our Tanzanian colleagues will be able to return to Geneva for the Meeting of States Parties in December to announce their country's ratification and take their place in the seats at the front of the house.

On Angola, we have had some recent contacts reported, but it seems that the accession process is yet to get under way. I am pleased to note, however, that Angola is participating as an observer in this Meeting, and I hope that this is a positive sign of recognition of the relevance and importance of the BWC to the Angolan government.

Before we leave Africa, I would like to acknowledge gratefully the efforts of Portugal, France, the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States in carrying out demarches and reporting results. I hope you will continue your efforts, and I encourage others to join you.

In my own region, the Americas, we remain hopeful of progress towards ratification in Haiti and Guyana. I am very pleased that Haiti is participating in our Meeting this week, which I take as a positive sign. I will report further in December on Canadian efforts in these two countries. As for the last hold-out in Europe, Andorra, I understand that France and Spain may soon be launching a pincer movement to secure an early accession.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge, on behalf of all States Parties, the excellent work being done on universalization by the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP). I hope all delegations have collected a copy of the BWPP universalization report, which was launched yesterday after the poster session. This report is a very helpful and practical contribution to our campaign, and is yet another demonstration of the valuable role that can be played by civil society in advancing the aims of the BWC.

I hope that over the next few months you will all continue your efforts to encourage states not party to join the Convention. Please use all the information available to guide your efforts – the ISU website, 2008 universalization report, and the BWPP report, as well as information provided through bilateral and regional channels. And please report the results of your contacts, so that others can make use of the information in their own efforts.

I remain optimistic, and I look forward to having further progress to report at the Meeting of States Parties in December.