

# **Biological Weapons Convention: Regional Group Meetings November 2015**

## **Chairman's Speaking Notes**

*Western Group: 10:00- 10:45, Thursday 19 November 2015, room V*

*Eastern European Group: 11.30-12:15, 19 November 2015, room V*

*Group of NAM and Other States: 10:30-11:15, 20 November 2015, room V*

- I extend my appreciation to the Regional Coordinator for convening this meeting and to all Representatives for the support in our work this year. Together, we held a very rich and productive Meeting of Experts in August on the three standing agenda items and the biennial topic. A compilation of the proposals and inputs put forward during the Meeting of Experts is available, as States Parties are aware, in an annex to the Report of the Meeting of Experts contained in BWC/MSP/2015/MX/3 (available on the BWC website in all six UN languages).
- I am privileged to enjoy working with two highly experienced Vice-chairs, Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast of the Netherlands and Ambassador György Molnár, Special Representative of the Foreign Minister for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non Proliferation of Hungary. Ambassador van der Kwast was not able to join us today and Ambassador Molnár was not able to come to Geneva, but I am happy that Mr. David Pusztai is able to represent Ambassador Molnár and Mark Verstedden is represented Ambassador van der Kwast.

### **Structure of the current meeting**

- Today, I have four main aims for our consultations:
  1. I will share with you the progress made in the preparations for the MSP; and I will seek feedback from you on these preparatory arrangements. I will also give the floor to the ISU for some administrative and logistical information. The floor will then be open again for your comments on our forthcoming meeting;
  2. I will address the substantive part of our meeting, and the outcome of the Meeting of States Parties;
  3. I will update you on progress with universalization and the submission of CBMs;
  4. I will give the floor to Mr. Daniel Feakes, Chief of the ISU, who will update you on ISU staffing matters. The floor will then be open for your questions or comments, if any.

## **Part I – Preparations for the MSP**

- In my most recent letter to States Parties, dated 19 October, I outlined my intentions with regard to the organization of the forthcoming Meeting of States Parties (MSP), in accordance also with the practice of the previous Chairmen. I hope you have all received this letter, along with the synthesis paper and the provisional programme of work. If not, you can download it from the BWC website, and we have some copies available here in the room.

### *Agenda and programme of work*

- Attached to my recent letter was a draft of the provisional programme of work for the Meeting of States Parties. It is based on the one we adopted at the MSP in 2014, but also based on the programme from the 2010 MSP, which was the final MSP before the Seventh Review Conference. As was done in 2010, the current provisional programme of work includes an agenda item (item 13) on arrangements for the Eighth Review Conference. As was also done in 2010, I propose that we address this item early in our meeting, namely on Tuesday 15 December. And like in previous years, I have ensured that we maintain the balance between the various agenda items and the biennial topic.

- The provisional agenda and programme of work have been available for several weeks on the BWC website as documents BWC/MSP/2015/1 and BWC/MSP/2015/2 respectively.
- I trust these are acceptable to delegations, but would welcome any comments or reactions in this regard.

*On arrangements for the Eighth Review Conference*

- In contrast to the past three MSPs, the upcoming meeting is also mandated to approve arrangements for the Eighth Review Conference and its Preparatory Committee. These arrangements include the nomination of the President of the Review Conference, the dates for the Conference and the estimated costs of the Conference. An agenda item, number 13, has been included in the provisional agenda of the MSP for this purpose. Both MSPs which preceded the last two Review Conferences – the MSP in 2005 and the MSP in 2010 – also took similar decisions.
- In this regard, I have taken careful note of the views expressed by several States Parties on this matter during the First Committee and of the draft resolution on the BWC which was approved without a vote by the First Committee on 3 November. Operative paragraph 9 of the resolution stresses “the importance of transparent and inclusive preparation for the Eighth Review Conference, to be held in 2016, and encourages States parties to establish a preparatory process allowing for the due and balanced consideration of both substantial and procedural issues related to the review of the Convention and its implementation.”
- In recognition of the draft resolution and the views expressed by States Parties in New York, and following discussions with the Depositary Governments, it is my intention to propose that next year we meet for two Preparatory Committee meetings each of one week, and for a Review Conference of three weeks as is traditional. Such an approach will entail some modest costs, but it is designed to reflect the widespread calls for a strengthened preparatory process in advance of the Review Conference. While the final decision will obviously be taken by the MSP, I would appreciate hearing your views on this proposal as soon as possible.

*On side events:*

- With regard to side events during the MSP, I am delighted to see a lot of interest with more demands on reserving slots than the number of lunch sessions available. For that reason, in several cases, it has not been possible to give those requesting side events their preferred slot. I thank the organizers of the side-events for their flexibility and understanding. In view of the number of side events, there will certainly be, in some cases two side events that will take place in parallel rooms.

*On the role of the Vice-Chairs during the MSP:*

- I would like to add that, as was done previously, I will be asking the two Vice-Chairs, Ambassador van der Kwast of the Netherlands and Ambassador György Molnár of Hungary, to assist me in chairing sessions during the MSP.

*On the BWC sponsorship programme*

- With regard to the sponsorship programme, using the generous voluntary contributions from Finland and the Netherlands, we have been able to sponsor five experts from developing countries to attend the MSP. However, we had a very high level of interest this year and fortunately some other States Parties have also stepped forward to sponsor additional participants. I take this opportunity to convey my appreciation to those among you who have been forthcoming in contributing to this important tool for our efforts to universalize the Convention and ensure broad participation of States Parties.
- I would like now to ask the ISU to speak briefly about various logistic and administrative matters. I now give the floor to Mr. Daniel Feakes.

- Thank you for giving me the floor Ambassador and thanks to the coordinator for hosting this briefing this morning.
  - It is a pleasure to brief you on the practical arrangements for the upcoming Meeting of States Parties which will take place from 14-18 December in conference room XVIII in the Palais. All practical details are provided in the aide-memoire which is available on the MSP page of the BWC website.
  - Registration for the Meeting of States Parties is now open. Many States Parties have already submitted the details of their delegations to the MSP but, for those yet to do so, the process is very simple and can be best done by sending a note verbale to the ISU containing the names of the members of your delegation. Passes will be prepared for those not currently based on Geneva, and these passes can be collected as of lunchtime on Friday 11 December. The ISU would appreciate receiving all registration details by 30 November.
  - Also on the webpage you will find the first official documents of the MSP - the provisional agenda and programme of work to which the Chairman has already referred, the synthesis paper and the first working paper. More official documents are currently being processed and will follow in the coming weeks. The page also includes advance copies of the 2015 ISU report and the Chairman's report on universalization. Any delegations wishing to submit documents to the MSP are encouraged to contact the ISU as soon as possible.
  - As in previous years, the ISU will compile an informal rolling, detailed indicative schedule which combines details from the programme of work with up-to-date information on side events. The schedule will shortly be posted on the BWC website. It is an indicative document provided for your ease of reference which will be updated as regularly as possible by the ISU. However, it is not an official document and should not be taken as a final schedule.
  - Delegations wishing to be included in the list of speakers for the general debate should contact the ISU soon in order to be included on the list.
  - Finally, we have just been informed that on Sunday 13 December the US National Academy of Sciences and the Royal Dutch Academy of Science will organize a workshop on biosecurity-related activities in the ASEAN region. Further details will be posted soon on the BWC website, including information on how to register to attend the event.
  - That concludes the information that I wanted to provide on preparations for the MSP, but I am very happy to respond to any questions from delegations whenever you decide to open the floor, Mr Chairman.
- Thank you Daniel for briefing us on the various logistic and administrative matters.

## **Part II - Outcome of the MSP**

- Moving on to the outcome of the MSP, I expect the Report of the MSP to closely resemble those adopted in previous years. I anticipate, therefore, that the 2015 report would include both factual and substantive sections.
- The substantive elements of the report would likely cover both previously agreed elements and new common understandings. Our substantive output will need to preserve the balance between the standing agenda items and the biennial item, as provided for in the Final Document of the Seventh Review Conference.

- As I have communicated to you previously, I am also keen that we find a way to fully address the part of our mandate to promote effective action. I hope that we can find a way to capture this in the report of our meeting.
- Without straying from past precedent, I am keen that we explore every opportunity to facilitate our work at the Meeting of States Parties.
- The feedback I hope to hear today on the synthesis paper which was annexed to my letter of 19 October will be key in helping me to shape the substantive elements of the MSP report. The synthesis paper is also now available as document BWC/MSP/2015/L.1 on the BWC website. As its title makes clear, the paper is a “synthesis of considerations, lessons, perspectives, recommendations, conclusions and proposals drawn from the presentations, statements, working papers and interventions on the topics under discussion at the Meeting of Experts.” It is not intended to be a basis for the negotiation of the report of the MSP. Like the compilation which was annexed to the report of the Meeting of Experts, the synthesis paper is intended to assist delegations in their preparations for the MSP. I encourage you to be as frank and comprehensive with your insights as possible.

### **Part III – Universalization and CBMs**

- I would also take this opportunity to provide updates on several issues related to the confidence-building measures and universalization:
- I have been informed by the ISU that CBM submissions have reached 70. While this is very promising compared with previous years, and we may exceed the highest number of 71 CBM submissions (set in 2010) by the end of the year, it is still disappointing considering that we now have 173 States Parties. I would therefore like to once again encourage all States Parties to submit CBMs and reiterate that a late submission is much better than no submission.
- With regards to universalization, we have received very promising reports regarding Angola and Côte d’Ivoire. Further details on universalization activities will be included in my Universalization Report to the MSP in December. The advance copy of the report is already available on the BWC website.
- In this context, let me also inform you that, between April and October 2015, I have conducted a number of bilateral meetings in Geneva with the following States not party and signatory States: Central African Republic, Chad, the Comoros, Côte d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Guinea, Haiti, Liberia, Namibia, Nepal, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Republic of Tanzania.
- On 6 and 7 October 2015, on the margins of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, I also held a number of bilateral meetings with representatives of the following States not party and Signatory States: Angola, Kiribati, Micronesia, Samoa and Tuvalu. I prioritized contacts with the four States from the Pacific region, as they are not represented in Geneva. With reference to Angola, I sought clarification on its status regarding the BWC, following its accession to the CWC.

### **Part IV – ISU staffing**

- I would now like to give the floor to Mr. Feakes to update you on ISU staffing related matters.

- With regard to ISU staffing, you will all be aware that the recruitment processes for the p3 and p4 posts in the the ISU took several months. We received 450 applications in total. However, after a very thorough recruitment process in accordance with the relevant UN rules and regulations, the process has been concluded and the outcome was announced in the Chairman's letter of 19 October.
- Ms Ngoc Phuong van der Blij, who you all know very well, has been selected for the P3 post, and Mr Hermann Lampalzer has been chosen for the P4 post. While Ms van der Blij is already working with the ISU, Mr Lampalzer cannot join until January 2016.
- Thank you Daniel.

## **Conclusion**

- In conclusion:
  - I would like to hear any feedback you may have on my recent letter or the remarks I made today on its content.
  - I am keen to continue to consult with delegations on an ongoing basis. I need to hear your opinions, what you like, and what you do not. This is your process and I see my job as helping you make the most of it.
  - Finally, I look forward to working with you all to ensure an efficient, effective and productive Meeting of States Parties, with a view to making a valuable contribution to our intersessional programme.
  - The floor is now open for comments and questions.

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