

**MEETING 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, 9-13 December 2013

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To the Permanent Representatives in Geneva 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

18 February 2013

**BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION: MEETINGS IN 2013**

Excellency,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chairman of the 2013 meetings of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) to outline my plans for these meetings, and to invite your input and collaboration in preparing for them. At the outset, I would like to thank you for the confidence you have expressed in supporting my appointment as Chairman. I am also privileged to enjoy the support of our two distinguished Vice-chairs, Ambassador Mazlan Muhammad of Malaysia and Ambassador Urs Schmid of Switzerland, and I will be working closely with them throughout the year.

The Meeting of Experts will be held in Geneva from 12–16 August 2013, and the Meeting of States Parties from 9–13 December 2013. As decided by the Seventh Review Conference, these meetings will discuss, and promote common understanding and effective action on the three standing agenda items and the biennial item, the details of which are included on the attached paper for your ease of reference.

I intend to maintain the tried and tested working practices of the intersessional programme, and to continue along the lines established by the previous Chairman, Ambassador Delmi, in 2012. I believe it is important to build upon the sense of trust and common purpose we have developed, and to maintain the constructive atmosphere of our work. So I will not be proposing changes to the overall structure of our programme.

Within our existing mandate and structure, however, I believe we can improve the process of preparing for our meetings, make more efficient and productive use of our precious meeting time, and enhance the practical value of the programme to States Parties. I believe the key to improving our process is to **bring in more voices**. This means:

- Increasing the number of States Parties participating actively in our meetings. We need to hear more, from a wider range of States Parties, about their needs, concerns,

interests, experiences and ideas with respect to our agenda items. This is especially the case for smaller states, which have the most to gain from the meetings of the intersessional programme.

- Broadening the range of participation within national delegations. Many countries may have activities and expertise at a national level which are relevant to our work, but which have not been brought into our meetings. This may be due to lack of awareness, or to financial constraints, or to other reasons. Where barriers to wider participation exist, we should work in partnership to identify and overcome them.
- Extending engagement with states not party. In many ways, the utility of the intersessional programme is the best advertisement for membership of the BWC. Encouraging participation in our meetings by states not party will be a key aspect of my efforts on universalization.
- Continuing our efforts to engage the scientific community, academia, industry and relevant NGOs. As recognized by States Parties, the input of these actors is important to our work. We should continue to identify relevant experts from outside of government and include them in our meetings through the established procedures.

My hope is that by bringing in more voices we will be able to develop a detailed schedule for the Meeting of Experts that supports an efficient, focused and structured discussion on the aspects of our agenda that are of most interest to States Parties. Rather than try to specify in advance which sub-items of our extensive agenda to focus on this year, my approach is rather to consult widely and to shape the schedule around the areas of greatest interest, where particular experts have been identified, and where we can construct an ordered, coherent discussion that leads toward the development of common understanding and effective action. I am therefore requesting your specific input and suggestions on:

- What your government is most interested in discussing: in what areas of the three standing agenda items and the biennial item would you most like to see focused discussion and action? What can be built on from 2012? What needs new attention? (It may be helpful in this regard to look over the outcome of the 2012 Meeting of States Parties, BWC/MSP/2012/5.)
- Who your government considers could most usefully contribute to this discussion: which are the national or international, government or non-government experts who could best support our goals? Can you propose a specific expert from within your government to speak on a particular sub-item? Could you join with other States Parties to make a group presentation on an item of common interest?

Based on the responses and feedback from States Parties, I intend to prepare and circulate at a very early stage a preliminary schedule for the Meeting of Experts, if possible already listing some speakers and presentations. I would hope that this outline will then stimulate and inspire others to register their contributions, and we will continuously update and refine the schedule, the latest version of which will always be visible on the ISU website. In this way, we will have maximum transparency about what is likely to be discussed, and this will facilitate States Parties' preparations, both on substance and in the practical matter of coordinating attendance by experts.

### Sponsorship programme

I view the BWC sponsorship programme, which was established by the Seventh Review Conference in order to support and increase the participation of developing States Parties in BWC meetings, as an important part of my effort to **bring in more voices** to our intersessional programme. I urge any States Parties in a position to do so to consider making voluntary contributions to fund this programme. The ISU will shortly circulate instructions on how to apply for sponsorship under the programme in 2013.

### Side events

Many States Parties find the side events at BWC meetings to be highly relevant and useful, and there have been suggestions that the side events could better complement the formal meetings. In view of this, and the growing demand for limited time slots, I propose to institute a more coordinated system of scheduling side events. Instead of a simple first-come-first-served allocation of slots, requests to hold side events will now be collected by the ISU until **14 June**. The Vice-chairs, ISU and I will then consider the requests, identify any common themes and potential synergies with the official programme and, in full consultation with the organisers of the proposed events, develop a schedule that best complements and supports our work. This side-event schedule will then be published on the ISU website by **28 June**, and updated as necessary.

### Universality

The Seventh Review Conference mandated the Chairman of the intersessional programme to coordinate universalization activities. In this capacity, I am delighted to welcome Cameroon, which acceded in January, as the 167th State Party to the BWC. But 29 states remain outside our Convention, and I will be working with the Vice-chairs, the Depositaries and the ISU on a range of activities to engage with states not party. I encourage all States Parties to renew their own efforts to encourage others to join the Convention, using all appropriate bilateral, regional and multilateral channels. I would be grateful if you would keep me and the ISU informed of your contacts and any feedback received.

### Confidence-building measures (CBMs)

I would also 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 2013**. The Seventh Review Conference adopted revised forms for the CBMs, which are available on the ISU website ([www.unog.ch/bwc/cbms](http://www.unog.ch/bwc/cbms)). Please contact the ISU if you need any advice or assistance with participating in the CBMs.

### Next steps

I welcome all ideas and feedback you may have. This is a collaborative process, not one driven by the Chair, and I rely on your advice and support. Although I am not based in Geneva, I can be readily contacted directly by e-mail at [jkoromi@mfa.gov.hu](mailto:jkoromi@mfa.gov.hu), or else through the ISU or the Permanent Mission of Hungary. I would propose to consult the regional groups for an initial exchange of views during my next visit to Geneva in the third week of April, but please do not hesitate to contact me before then if you would like to discuss any aspect of our work this year.

We made a good start to the 2012–2015 intersessional programme last year, and I am confident that with active and thorough preparation we can continue to build a programme that makes a genuine contribution to reducing the risks posed to global security by biological weapons. I look forward to working closely with you in pursuit of our shared objective of strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention.

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



Judit Körömi  
Special Representative of the Foreign  
Minister of Hungary for Arms Control,  
Disarmament and Non-proliferation  
Chairman of the Meeting of States Parties

Attachment: Outline of Standing and Biennial Agenda Items (2 pages)

## **BWC Intersessional Programme 2013**

### **Outline of Standing and Biennial Agenda Items (from BWC/CONF.VII/7)**

#### **A. Standing agenda items**

##### **1. Cooperation and assistance, with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation and assistance under Article X**

- (a) reports by States Parties on their implementation of Article X, and reports by the ISU on the operation of the database system to facilitate assistance requests and offers;
- (b) challenges and obstacles to developing international cooperation, assistance and exchange in the biological sciences and technology, including equipment and material, for peaceful purposes to their full potential, and possible means of overcoming these;
- (c) a range of specific measures for the full and comprehensive implementation of Article X taking into account all of its provisions, including facilitation of cooperation and assistance, including in terms of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for peaceful purposes, and identification of critical gaps and needs in these areas;
- (d) ways and means to target and mobilize resources, including financial resources, to address gaps and needs for assistance and cooperation, in particular from developed to developing States Parties, and from international and regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders;
- (e) education, training, exchange and twinning programmes and other means of developing human resources in the biological sciences and technology relevant to the implementation of the Convention, particularly in developing countries;
- (f) capacity-building, through international cooperation, in biosafety and biosecurity, and for detecting, reporting, and responding to outbreaks of infectious disease or biological weapons attacks, including in the areas of preparedness, response, and crisis management and mitigation;
- (g) coordination of cooperation with other relevant international and regional organizations, and other relevant stakeholders.

##### **2. Review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention**

- (a) new science and technology developments that have potential for uses contrary to the provisions of the Convention;
- (b) new science and technology developments that have potential benefits for the Convention, including those of special relevance to disease surveillance, diagnosis and mitigation;

- (c) possible measures for strengthening national biological risk management, as appropriate, in research and development involving new science and technology developments of relevance to the Convention;
- (d) voluntary codes of conduct and other measures to encourage responsible conduct by scientists, academia and industry;
- (e) education and awareness-raising about risks and benefits of life sciences and biotechnology.
- (f) science- and technology-related developments relevant to the activities of multilateral organizations such as the WHO, OIE, FAO, IPPC and OPCW;
- (g) any other science and technology developments of relevance to the Convention.

**The following topical scientific subject will be considered in 2013:**

Advances in technologies for surveillance, detection, diagnosis and mitigation of infectious diseases, and similar occurrences caused by toxins in humans, animals and plants.

**3. Strengthening national implementation**

- (a) a range of specific measures for the full and comprehensive implementation of the Convention, especially Articles III and IV;
- (b) ways and means to enhance national implementation, sharing best practices and experiences, including the voluntary exchange of information among States Parties on their national implementation, enforcement of national legislation, strengthening of national institutions and coordination among national law enforcement institutions;
- (c) regional and sub-regional cooperation that can assist national implementation of the Convention;
- (d) national, regional and international measures to improve laboratory biosafety and security of pathogens and toxins;
- (e) any potential further measures, as appropriate, relevant for implementation of the Convention.

**B. Biennial item (2012–2013)**

How to enable fuller participation in the CBMs.

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