

**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**

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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

25 May 2016

Excellency,

I am writing to share my thoughts on the Preparatory Committee meeting that took place in Geneva from 26-27 April and to brief you on my plans for the preparations for the resumption of our work from 8 to 12 August.

April meeting

Given that we are in somewhat “uncharted waters” with the decision of the 2015 Meeting of States Parties to establish a different approach to this preparatory process, I would like to thank States Parties for the professional and constructive manner in which they handled the first session of the Preparatory Committee, which allowed us to conduct our work in a collegial spirit. I think this bodes very well for our continued work in August and for the Review Conference itself.

I was pleased that we were able at our meeting in April to address several of the necessary procedural issues for the efficient planning and preparation of the Review Conference in November. I was especially gratified that States Parties responded positively to my request to come to the meeting with concrete proposals for consideration by the Review Conference. In particular, I would like to thank those States Parties which took part in the “general exchange of views” for their willingness to share their ideas at an early stage, and also for their involvement in the interactive segment of the discussion.

Many interesting proposals were tabled in April, and it is clear that a lot of time and effort has gone into their development. Between now and August, I would encourage States Parties to continue to work on existing and new proposals. In some areas where there were a number of proposals there appears to be a degree of convergence of ideas. I hope that interested States Parties will consider the option of working together informally in the coming months in order to identify mutually acceptable approaches in their proposals.

As the preparations for the Review Conference intensify in the months to come, I may consider seeking the assistance of individuals to assist me as friends of the chair on particular topics. At this stage it is too early to identify where such assistance may be required.

August meeting

Programme of work

As I have stated on several occasions, our April meeting was not the only opportunity for States Parties to table proposals. For this reason, I would like to reiterate my encouragement to States Parties to submit ideas and proposals at any time. Proposals submitted in written form can quickly be processed by the Implementation Support Unit and posted on the BWC website for all to see. The next opportunity for proposals to be presented and discussed will be at the resumed session of the Preparatory Committee in August. Given that this will be a longer session, it is my intention to prepare a programme of work, based on suggestions received from States Parties over the coming weeks.

I would hope that we can quickly address the remaining procedural issues at the start of the meeting in August. I would like to recall that we reached general understanding at our April meeting on several such issues, and it appeared that there was no objection to adopting formal decisions on them in accordance with standard practice at our resumed session. Then, as I have mentioned before, we would return to the “general exchange of views”, so that States Parties can present new or revised proposals or indeed elaborate further on their existing proposals. Once the “general exchange of views” has been concluded, my intention would be to switch to an informal session in order to hear brief statements from speakers from non-governmental organizations, as has been the practice at many previous BWC meetings.

We would then turn to the main work of the August meeting as decided by the Meeting of States Parties. I intend to begin with those topics which do not fit neatly into the natural structure of the articles of the Convention. For example, questions relating to any future intersessional programme after the Review Conference, or questions relating to the Implementation Support Unit. I would also like to seek your inputs on possible common ground leading to deliverables at the Review Conference. Thereafter, we will address item 7 of the agenda of the Preparatory Committee – “comprehensive consideration of all provisions of the Convention”. The articles of the Convention provide a natural structure to this agenda item, so I propose that we should structure our deliberations in accordance with the articles of the Convention using a rolling schedule. Those States Parties who see close linkages between certain articles of the Convention may clarify that during the discussion. Such an approach should provide for a balanced and well-structured discussion during the meeting. I would very much value the views of States Parties in this regard.

Summary report

At the conclusion of the August meeting of the Preparatory Committee, I am mandated to produce a summary report without prejudice to the perspectives, recommendations, conclusions and proposals presented by delegations or that prejudices the final outcome of the Review Conference. My intention is that this document will be brief and factual and I hope that it will serve a useful purpose in States Parties’ preparations for the Review Conference.

Background documentation

Our discussions in August will be informed by the background documentation which the Preparatory Committee in April requested the ISU to prepare. As you will recall, the ISU will prepare in time for the August meeting, papers on the following five topics:

- The history and operation of the confidence-building measures agreed at the Second Review Conference and revised at the Third and Seventh Review Conferences;
- The financial implications of proposals for follow-on action after the Eighth Review Conference;
- The additional understandings and agreements reached by previous Review Conferences relating to each article of the Convention;
- The common understandings reached by the Meetings of States Parties during the intersessional programme held from 2012 to 2015; and
- The status of universalization of the Convention.

The ISU is currently working on these documents in order that they will be available, in all official languages, at least four weeks prior to our August meeting. I hope that these documents will contribute towards constructive discussions at the meeting.

As you will recall, a further three background documents are to be compiled by the ISU from inputs provided by States Parties and will be ready, in all official languages, in advance of the Review Conference itself. These three documents will address the following topics:

- Compliance by States Parties with all their obligations under the Convention;
- The implementation of Article VII; and
- The implementation of Article X, including information submitted pursuant to paragraph 61 of the Final Declaration of the Seventh Review Conference.

On 23 May, the Chief of the ISU, Daniel Feakes, sent a letter to all States Parties which sets out the process for the submission and production of these three papers. I would like to encourage all States Parties to submit inputs to these papers to the ISU in good time, and certainly before the 19 August deadline.

Other issues

Universalization

I would also like to take this opportunity to inform you of my activities relating to universalization of the Convention. On 6 April, I met with Mr. Apolinário Jorge Correia, Permanent Representative of Angola to the United Nations in Geneva, and on 28 April I met with Mr. Deepak Dhital, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations in Geneva. I am happy to report that both countries are close to joining the Convention, and hope to complete the process within the coming months.

On 1 June in New York, I will meet with the Secretary-General of the United Nations to brief him on preparations for the Review Conference and to invite him to open the meeting. On 2 and 3 June I will meet with the representatives in New York of States not party to the Convention who do not have Permanent Missions in Geneva in order to encourage them to join the Convention. Furthermore, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, Mr. Péter Sijjártó, will soon write to his counterparts in the 22 States yet to join the Convention and encourage them to do so.

Sponsorship programme

I would like to thank Australia and the European Union for their contributions to the sponsorship programme this year. I understand that several other States Parties in a position to do so are also considering contributing to the programme. I would like to encourage as many States Parties to contribute as possible, since it is very important to have as diverse and representative a participation in the Review Conference as possible. The ISU has recently informed all States Parties of the availability of sponsorship for the Preparatory Committee and the Review Conference and of the application process which is explained at www.unog.ch/bwc/sponsorship

Financial issues

As I mentioned in my previous letter, more scrutiny is now being applied to financial aspects due to new accounting systems being introduced within the United Nations. It is therefore more important than ever that States Parties pay their assessed contributions on time and in full. Contributions for 2016 should be paid as soon as possible, and outstanding contributions for previous years should also be paid. Outstanding contributions to the BWC currently amount to approximately USD 390,000.

Related events

Over the coming months, several informal events in preparation for the Review Conference will be taking place. Under its new Council Decision in support of the Convention, the European Union is supporting four regional workshops to take place in Astana, Kazakhstan in June, New Delhi, India in late August or early September, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in September (hosted by the African Union) and Brasilia, Brazil in September. In July, China intends to host an international workshop on the Convention and the Review Conference. I encourage States Parties to take advantage of these opportunities for informal discussions on the preparations for the Review Conference. In addition, the ISU is collaborating with local partners in Geneva to organize two workshops, on 27 June and 19 September, to provide information about the Review Conference to Geneva-based delegations.

Finally, I would like to inform you that I plan to be in Geneva again during the week of 20 June at which time I would once again be willing to meet with regional groups, particularly in order to hear comments and feedback on the contents of this letter and the approaches that I have outlined above. I also remain available at any time and can be contacted via the details on the BWC website, or via the Permanent Mission of Hungary in Geneva.

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