

**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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Secretariat:  
BWC Implementation Support Unit  
United Nations Office for Disarmament  
Affairs (Geneva Branch)  
Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10  
Switzerland

tel: +41 (0)22 917 2230  
fax: +41 (0)22 917 0483  
e-mail: [bwc@unog.ch](mailto:bwc@unog.ch)  
web: <http://www.unog.ch/bwc>

To the Permanent Representatives 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

15 December 2016

**BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION – COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE  
DATABASE**

Excellency,

As you are aware, the Eighth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) concluded on 25 November 2016. In Part III of its final document, the Review Conference decided to continue the cooperation and assistance database established by the Seventh Review Conference in 2011.

In this regard, the Review Conference mandated that the Implementation Support Unit (ISU), with inputs to be provided by States Parties, “will seek to improve the database to ensure that it is more user-friendly and comprehensive, and ensure that specific, timely and concrete offers of and requests for cooperation be provided by States Parties in the database.”

The ISU would therefore like to invite States Parties to submit inputs on the cooperation and assistance database with a view to its improvement in accordance with the objectives set out by the Eighth Review Conference. Issues to be addressed in such inputs could include, *inter alia*:

- Format and degree of information to be provided on requests/offers;
- Mechanisms for communicating offers and requests to States Parties;
- Design features and functionality of the database with a view to improving its user-friendliness;
- Modalities for reporting on requests responded to by offering States Parties; and
- Availability of resources to support the improvement of the database given that no additional funding was allocated for improving the database.

In order to facilitate States Parties’ preparation of inputs, the ISU would like to recall that the offers submitted to the database can be accessed on the public BWC website.<sup>1</sup> The requests submitted to the database can be accessed on the restricted area of the BWC website.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See

[http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/\(httpAssets\)/394EF614BC9C8616C1257FF5004DB6E5/\\$file/Table\\_assistance+offers\\_100716.pdf](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/394EF614BC9C8616C1257FF5004DB6E5/$file/Table_assistance+offers_100716.pdf)

Furthermore, the ISU has prepared the short paper annexed to this letter which provides basic information about the cooperation and assistance database and its operation. Much of this information was included in the report of the ISU to the Eighth Review Conference, see document BWC/CONF.VIII/PC/7 and BWC/CONF.VIII/PC/7/Amend.1 and in the presentation which I made to the Review Conference on 14 November 2016.<sup>3</sup>

In order to be able to commence seeking to improve the database at the earliest possible opportunity, **the ISU would kindly request States Parties to submit their inputs by 28 February 2017.** The ISU will post the inputs received on the BWC website so that they are available for other States Parties to consider.

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



Daniel Feakes  
Chief, BWC Implementation Support Unit

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<sup>2</sup> Username and password available on request from the ISU.

<sup>3</sup> Presentation available at

[http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/\(httpAssets\)/12B63F8CD98DF2C6C125806D005523E4/\\$file/Presentation+A&C-database+&+Sponsorship\\_RevCon.pdf](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/12B63F8CD98DF2C6C125806D005523E4/$file/Presentation+A&C-database+&+Sponsorship_RevCon.pdf)

## Annex

[as extracted from BWC/CONF.VIII/PC/7 as amended by BWC/CONF.VIII/PC/7/Amend.1]<sup>4</sup>

### “Cooperation and assistance database

26. The Seventh Review Conference decided to establish a "database system to facilitate requests for and offers of exchange of assistance and cooperation among States Parties".<sup>5</sup> The Conference mandated the ISU to establish and administer a database where the requests and offers would be stored; to facilitate, on request, the exchange of information among States Parties relating to the database and any resulting cooperation and assistance activities; and to report to States Parties on the operation of the database detailing the offers made, requests sought and matches made during a calendar year.

27. As decided by the 2013 Meeting of States Parties, the offers of assistance are available on the public area of the BWC website, while the requests for assistance are available to States Parties in the restricted area of the website.<sup>6</sup> As of 27 September 2016, the database contained:

(a) A total of 61 offers of assistance, from eight States Parties (Canada, Cuba, Denmark, France, Germany, Mexico, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America) and one group of States Parties (the Australia Group); and

(b) A total of 23 requests for assistance, from six States Parties; and one update of a request of assistance. Since the last report in November 2015, 15 new entries have been recorded by the ISU.

29. The ISU has also maintained regular contact with relevant assistance providers. For example, the ISU worked with providers of assistance for related national legislation and enforcement measures such as the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC) and the Committee established pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004).

30. The objective of a "database system" has not yet been reached. The Seventh Review Conference tasked the ISU with the establishment and maintenance of a database, a basic version of which is available on the BWC website. However, the Review Conference did not allocate any additional resources for the development of a fully functioning database and consequently the function of matching offers of and requests for assistance has not worked as well as was hoped. Furthermore, as recognized by the 2014 Meeting of States Parties, usage of the database by States Parties has been "low".<sup>7</sup> Until recently, few offers or requests had been submitted to the ISU and even now there are many more offers of assistance than requests. This could be partly a result of the requests for assistance being placed on the restricted area of the BWC website.

31. It has become apparent that some potential requesting States Parties would rather have their needs addressed informally or on a bilateral level, rather than having the information appear in the database. A part of the problem may be the lack of precision in the requests and offers, which could derive from a lack of structure to the whole process. A more structured approach to identifying needs and providing assistance as found in similar mechanisms, could remedy some of the

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<sup>4</sup> During the Eighth Review Conference an additional State Party submitted requests for assistance bringing the total mentioned in sub-paragraph 27(b) below to 30 requests from seven States Parties.

<sup>5</sup> See BWC/CONF.VII/7, Part III, paragraphs 17–20.

<sup>6</sup> See BWC/MSP/2013/5, paragraph 22(a).

<sup>7</sup> See BWC/MSP/2014/5, paragraph 22.

existing problems. A first step could be to provide resources for a more user-friendly database and for the ISU to proactively inform all States Parties when requests or offers are added to the database.

32. The 2013 and 2014 Meetings of States Parties noted the value of assessing the functionality of the database, strengthening its utilization and improving its operation. In accordance with the decision of the Seventh Review Conference, the operation of the database will be reviewed at the Eighth Review Conference.”



