

**Biological Weapons Convention: Regional Group Meetings  
Tuesday 5 April 2016**

**President-Designate's Speaking Notes**

*Western Group: 15:00 to 15:45, Room IX, Palais des Nations*

*Eastern European Group: 16:00 to 16:45, Room IX, Palais des Nations*

*Group of NAM and Other States: 17:00 to 17:45, Room IX, Palais des Nations*

Introduction

- I extend my warm appreciation to the Regional Coordinators for convening this meeting and to all Delegations for attending.
- This meeting is a follow-up to my letter to States Parties of 21 March 2016 which I hope you have all received and which is also available on the BWC website. I have come to Geneva again for another opportunity to hear your views on preparations for the Preparatory Committee that will take place from 26 to 27 April in Geneva.
- Today I would like to go over the preparations for the Preparatory Committee, and then make some more general comments on other issues. As we are approaching the Preparatory Committee, your views on any aspect of preparations, both substantive and procedural, for the Preparatory Committee and the Review Conference are more than ever welcome.

Preparations for the Preparatory Committee (26-27 April 2016)

*Election of officials*

- The Preparatory Committee in April will need to take decisions on matters such as the election of the Chairman and other officers, the adoption of its agenda and the organization of its work.
- The Preparatory Committee will need to elect:
  - **two Vice-Chairmen**, one from the Western Group and one from the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States. Those appointed will serve as Vice-Chairmen during the Preparatory Committee meetings in April and August.
- Following BWC practice, these Vice-Chairmen will then go on to become the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole and the Chairman of the Drafting Committee at the Review Conference itself:
  - In line with the rotation of posts among the regional groups, the **Chairman of the Committee of the Whole** will come from the Western Group, and the **Chairman of the Drafting Committee** will come from the Group of Non-Aligned and Other States. We will also establish a **Credentials Committee** which, in line with past practice, will be chaired by a representative from the Eastern European Group.
  - The Review Conference will also need **20 Vice-Presidents**:
    - ten from the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States;
    - six from the Western Group; and
    - four from the Eastern European Group.

- Furthermore, the Committee of the Whole and the Drafting Committee both require **two Vice-Chairmen** in line with past practice, while the Credentials Committee requires **one Vice-Chairman**.

- I believe the regional groups have started reflecting on the various nominations for the available positions and I hope that you may be in a position to share with me today some of your initial thoughts on the office holders, particularly the Vice-Chairmen of the Preparatory Committee.

#### *Provisional agenda*

- As you will remember, at the previous regional group briefings we considered a draft version of the provisional agenda for the Preparatory Committee which received general support. The formal version of the provisional agenda has been available in all official languages for several weeks on the BWC website as document BWC/CONF.VIII/PC/1. Regarding **agenda item 5, on general exchange of views**, I would like to once again encourage States Parties to submit proposals as early as possible, and to be prepared to present them during this general exchange of views. Of course, this does not preclude proposals being submitted at a later stage as well.
- On **agenda item 6, on the organization of the Review Conference**, a provisional agenda for the Review Conference and the provisional rules of procedure are also available in all official languages on the BWC website as documents BWC/CONF.VIII/PC/L.1 and L.2 respectively. The provisional agenda is identical to the agenda adopted by the Seventh Review Conference apart from a small necessary change to the title of one agenda item. The provisional rules of procedure are identical to those from previous Review Conferences, indeed they have remained unchanged for many years. Those two documents are purely provisional and prepared in order to facilitate our discussions on agenda item 6. In the light of these discussions in April and August, we may make adjustments to the provisional agenda, in which case a revised version can be circulated.

#### *Background papers*

- On the issue of background papers for the Review Conference, at the previous round of regional group briefings, we heard proposals **for two additional background papers**, one on developments in relation to the implementation of Article VII of the Convention and one on financial implications of proposals for follow-up action after the Review Conference. I would like to kindly request you to give further consideration to this issue so that, at the April meeting, we can task the ISU with the preparation of the necessary background papers.
- Again, this does not preclude the possibility of requesting additional background papers at a later stage, but we must bear in mind the time taken to draft such papers, as well as the time for translation and production. Furthermore, background papers are meant to support and facilitate delegates' preparations of the various meetings, the earlier they are available, the more useful they are for States Parties.

#### *NGO statements*

- As raised at the previous regional group briefings, the NGOs are keen to be able to make brief statements to the Preparatory Committee meeting in August, as has been the practice at previous review conferences and intersessional meetings. If we resume the general exchange of views at the August meeting, one approach could be to move into an informal session upon the completion of the exchange of views among States Parties. I would appreciate hearing the views of delegations on this suggestion today. I believe that

the NGOs make a valuable contribution to our work and that there is merit in hearing additional voices during the preparations for the Eighth Review Conference.

#### Other issues

##### *Universalization*

- As President-Designate I will be undertaking a range of initiatives to raise the profile of the Convention among Signatory States and States not party and to encourage them to join. I ask you to redouble your own efforts in this area, and to keep me informed.
- I was pleased to be informed yesterday by our Russian colleagues that **Côte d'Ivoire** deposited its instrument of ratification to the BWC in Moscow on 23 March, thereby becoming our 174<sup>th</sup> State Party. I would like to congratulate Côte d'Ivoire on this important step and welcome the country to our Convention. Furthermore, Angola appears to be very close to acceding to the Convention. Tomorrow I will be meeting the Permanent Representatives in Geneva of both countries, to congratulate Côte d'Ivoire and to seek further information on the progress Angola has made towards joining the BWC.
- I recently sent remarks to parliamentary roundtables in **Nepal** and **Tanzania** where good progress is also being made towards ratification.
- The Foreign Minister of Hungary will send a letter to his counterparts in the 22 Signatory States and States not party to the BWC encouraging them to join.

##### *Sponsorship programme*

- On the BWC Sponsorship Programme, I would like to express appreciation to **Australia** and to the **European Union** for their early commitment to support the programme. Other States Parties wishing to make a contribution should contact the ISU to discuss the practicalities at the earliest opportunity in order to make most efficient use of the funds available.
- As for applications, the ISU will circulate instructions on how to apply for sponsorship under the programme in early April. This information will also be available on the BWC website.

##### *Financial matters*

- In the past couple of weeks, your Missions should have received invoices for this year's BWC meetings from the finance department of the United Nations Office at Geneva. In this regard, the issue of that status of contributions to all disarmament treaties hosted in Geneva has been raised, an issue which was also mentioned by Mr Kim in his statement to the First Committee last year. In this light, I am considering to request the Secretariat to prepare a report on the status of contributions to the BWC and to circulate it to States Parties during the course of our preparations for the Review Conference this year.

##### *Next round of Regional Group briefings*

- Finally, with the agreement of the Coordinators, I would like to meet each Regional Group one more time prior to the Preparatory Committee meeting in April. I would suggest Monday 25 April, the day before the meeting starts. The ISU will shortly get in touch with each group coordinator to seek confirmation and to make the necessary arrangements.

Conclusion

- With the agreement of the Coordinator, I am keen to hear your views on the elements that I have just outlined, and on any other issues relating to our meetings this year that you would like to raise.
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