

Report of the Meeting of States Parties

I. Introduction

1. The Final Document of the 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 (BWC/CONF.VIII/4), in the Decisions and Recommendations section, contained the following decision:

“6. At its final plenary meeting, on 25 November 2016, the Conference decided that States Parties will hold annual meetings. The first such meeting, to be held in Geneva in 2017 starting on 4 December 2017, and having a duration of up to five days, will seek to make progress on issues of substance and process for the period before the next Review Conference, with a view to reaching consensus on an intersessional process.

7. Following the practice agreed at the Seventh Review Conference, the Conference agreed that the first year’s meeting will be chaired by a representative of the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States, the second by a representative of the Eastern European Group, the third by a representative of the Western Group, and the fourth by a representative of the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States. The annual Chair will be supported by two annual vice-chairs, one from each of the other two regional groups.”

2. By resolution 72/71, adopted without a vote on 4 December 2017, the General Assembly, *inter alia*, requested the Secretary-General to continue to render the necessary assistance to the depositary Governments of the Convention and to continue to provide such services as may be required for the conduct and the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the review conferences.

II. Organization of the Meeting of States Parties

3. In accordance with the decision of the Eighth Review Conference, the 2017 Meeting of States Parties was convened at the Palais des Nations in Geneva from 4 to 8 December 2017, under the chairmanship of Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament, with Mr. Michael Biontino, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament and Mr. Juraj Podhorsky, Ambassador of Slovakia as Vice-Chairs.

4. At its first meeting, on 4 December 2017, the Meeting of States Parties adopted its agenda (BWC/MSP/2017/1) and programme of work (BWC/MSP/2017/2) as proposed by the Chairman. The Chairman drew the attention of delegations to two reports: a report on universalization activities prepared by the Chairman (BWC/MSP/2017/3) and the report of the Implementation Support Unit (BWC/MSP/2017/4).

5. At the same meeting, following a suggestion by the Chairman, the Meeting of States Parties adopted as its rules of procedure, *mutatis mutandis*, the rules of procedure of the Eighth Review Conference (BWC/CONF.VIII/7).

6. Mr. Daniel Feakes, Chief, Implementation Support Unit, served as Secretary of the Meeting of States Parties. Mr. Hermann Lampalzer, Political Affairs Officer, Implementation Support Unit, served as Deputy Secretary and Ms. Ngoc Phuong van der Blij, Political Affairs Officer, Implementation Support Unit.

III. Participation at the Meeting of States Parties

7. [...] States Parties to the Convention participated in the Meeting of States Parties as follows: [...]

8. In addition, two States that had signed the Convention but had not yet ratified it participated in the Meeting of States Parties without taking part in the making of decisions, as provided for in rule 44, paragraph 1, of the rules of procedure: Syrian Arab Republic; and United Republic of Tanzania.

9. Two States, Israel and Namibia, neither parties nor signatories to the Convention, participated in the Meeting of States Parties as observers, in accordance with rule 44, paragraph 2 (a).

10. The United Nations, including the Group of Experts of the United Nations Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, attended the Meeting of States Parties in accordance with rule 44, paragraph 3.

11. The Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM), European Union, Food and Agriculture Organization, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Science and Technology Centre, International Criminal Police Organization, Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, World Animal Health Organization and the World Health Organization (WHO) were granted observer status to participate in the Meeting of States Parties in accordance with rule 44, paragraph 4.

12. Thirty-three non-governmental organizations and research institutes attended the Meeting of States Parties under rule 44, paragraph 5.

13. A list of all participants in the Meeting of States Parties is contained in document BWC/MSP/2017/INF.1.

IV. Work of the Meeting of States Parties

14. In accordance with the programme of work (BWC/MSP/2017/2), the Meeting of States Parties held a general debate in which the following [...] States Parties made statements: [...]. [...] observer organization(s), [...]. Following the general debate, during an informal session the Meeting heard statements from [...] non-governmental organizations and research institutes.

15. Between 4 and 8 December 2017, the Meeting of States Parties held sessions devoted to each of the items on its agenda. The opening formalities, agenda items 1 to 4 were considered on 4 December. The General Debate (agenda item 5) took

place on 4 and 5 December. Several sessions were devoted to consideration of agenda item 6 on 5, 6, 7 and 8 December. On 7 December, a session was devoted to progress with universalization of the Convention (agenda item 7) and the annual report of the Implementation Support Unit (agenda item 8). On 6 December, the Meeting considered financial matters and received a briefing from the Chief of the Financial Resource Management Service of the United Nations Office at Geneva (agenda item 9).

16. In the course of its work, the Meeting of States Parties was able to draw on a number of working papers submitted by States Parties, as well as on statements and presentations made by States Parties, international organizations and the Implementation Support Unit, which were circulated in the Meeting.

17. The Meeting of States Parties reviewed progress towards obtaining universality for the Convention and considered the report from the Chairman on universalization activities (BWC/MSP/2017/3), as well as reports from States Parties on their activities to promote universalization. The Meeting welcomed the deposit of the instrument of accession by Samoa which brought the number of States Parties to the Convention to 179. The States Parties reaffirmed the particular importance of the universality of the Convention and in this regard urged signatory States to ratify the Convention without delay and also urged those States that have not signed the Convention to accede without delay. In this context, the Meeting took note of the reports from States Parties, and called on all States Parties to continue to promote universalization, and to support the universalization activities of the Chairman with support from the Implementation Support Unit, in accordance with the decision of the Seventh Review Conference.

18. The Meeting of States Parties considered the report of the Implementation Support Unit (BWC/MSP/2017/4). The Meeting took note of the report, and expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Unit. The Meeting called on States Parties to continue working closely with the Implementation Support Unit in fulfilling its mandate, in accordance with the decision of the Eighth Review Conference.

19. The Meeting approved the nomination of the Eastern European Group of [...] of [...], as Chairman of the 2018 Meeting of States Parties and the nominations of the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States of [...] of [...] and by the Western Group of [...] of [...] as the two Vice-Chairs.

V. Intersessional Programme, 2018-2020

20. The 2017 Meeting of States Parties discussed issues of substance and process for the period before the Ninth Review Conference, with a view to reaching consensus on an intersessional process. Consensus was reached on:

- 1) Reaffirming previous intersessional programmes from 2003-2015 and retaining the previous structures: annual Meetings of States Parties preceded by annual Meetings of Experts.
- 2) The purpose of the intersessional programme is to discuss, and promote common

understanding and effective action on those issues identified for inclusion in the intersessional programme.

3) Recognising the need to balance an ambition to improve the intersessional programme within the constraints – both financial and human resources – facing States Parties, twelve days are allocated to the intersessional programme each year from 2018-2020. The work in the intersessional period will be guided by the aim of strengthening the implementation of all articles of the Convention in order to better respond to current challenges. The Meetings of Experts for eight days will be held back to back and at least three months before the annual Meetings of States Parties of four days each. Maximum use would be made of the Sponsorship Programme funded by voluntary contributions in order to facilitate participation of developing States Parties in the meetings of the intersessional programme.

4) The meetings of the MSP will be chaired by a representative of the EEG in 2018, a representative of the Western Group in 2019 and a representative of the Group of Non-Aligned Movement and Other States in 2020. The annual Chair will be supported by two annual vice-chairs, one from each of the other two regional groups. In addition to the reports of the Meetings of Experts, the Meetings of States Parties will consider the annual reports of the ISU and progress on universality. The Meetings of Experts will be chaired in 2018 by NAM (MX 1 and MX 2) and the Western Group (MX 3 and MX4), in 2019 by EEG (MX1 and MX 2) and NAM (MX 3 and MX 4), and in 2020 by Western Group (MX 1 and MX 2) and by EEG (MX 3 and MX 4); MX 5 will be chaired by the regional group chairing the MSP.

	<i>MSP</i>	<i>MX 1</i>	<i>MX 2</i>	<i>MX 3</i>	<i>MX 4</i>	<i>MX 5</i>
<i>2018</i>	<i>EEG</i>	<i>NAM</i>	<i>NAM</i>	<i>WG</i>	<i>WG</i>	<i>EEG</i>
<i>2019</i>	<i>WG</i>	<i>EEG</i>	<i>EEG</i>	<i>NAM</i>	<i>NAM</i>	<i>WG</i>
<i>2020</i>	<i>NAM</i>	<i>WG</i>	<i>WG</i>	<i>EEG</i>	<i>EEG</i>	<i>NAM</i>

All meetings will be subject *mutatis mutandis* to the rules of procedure of the Eighth Review Conference.

5) The Meetings of Experts would be open-ended and will consider the following topics:

MX1 (2 days): Cooperation and assistance, with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation and assistance under Article X:

- Consideration of the reports of the States Parties on their full and comprehensive implementation of all provisions of Article X;

- Review of the report by the ISU on the operation of the assistance and cooperation database established by the Seventh Review Conference and renewed by the Eighth Review Conference and consideration of its further operationalization, including measures to further strengthen the operation of the database, including in the light of BWC/MSP/2017/4;
- Identification of 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 ways and means of overcoming these;
- Development of guidelines and procedures for mobilizing resources, including financial resources on a voluntary basis to address gaps and needs;
- Facilitation of education, training, exchange and twinning programs and other means of developing human resources in biological sciences and technology related to implementation of the Convention, particularly in developing countries;
- Promotion of 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;
- Collaboration with international organizations and networks related to combating infectious diseases at all levels, as well as regional and sub-regional cooperation to promote implementation of all articles of the Convention.

MX2 (2 days): Review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention:

- Review of science and technology developments relevant to the Convention, including for the enhanced implementation of all articles of the Convention as well as the identification of potential benefits and risks of new science and technology developments relevant to the Convention, with a particular attention to positive implications;
- Biological risk assessment and management;
- Development of a voluntary model code of conduct for biological scientists and all relevant personnel, and biosecurity education, by drawing on the work already done on this issue in the context of the Convention, adaptable to national requirements;

- In 2018, the MX2 will address the specific topic of genome editing, taking into consideration, as appropriate, the issues identified above;
- Any other science and technology developments of relevance to the Convention and also to the activities of relevant multilateral organizations such as the WHO, OIE, FAO, IPPC and OPCW.

MX3 (1 day): Strengthening national implementation:

- Measures related to Article IV of the Convention;
- CBM submissions in terms of quantity and quality;
- Various ways to promote transparency and confidence building under the Convention;
- Role of international cooperation and assistance under Article X, in support of strengthening the implementation of the Convention;
- Issues related to Article III, including effective measures of export control, in full conformity with all Articles of the Convention, including Article X.

MX4 (2 days): Assistance, Response and Preparedness:

- Practical challenges facing the implementation of Article VII, and possible solutions;
- A set of guidelines and formats to assist a State Party, if required, when submitting an application for assistance in the framework of Article VII;
- Procedures, including the establishment and use of the assistance database, to improve the prompt and efficient response without preconditions to a request of assistance by a State Party under Article VII, and coordination and cooperation among States Parties and with relevant international and regional organizations such as WHO, OIE and FAO, as appropriate;
- Examination of how the concept of mobile biomedical units might contribute to effective assistance, response and preparation with a view to enhancing implementation of the Convention;

- Exploration of approaches by which States Parties, individually or collectively, might contribute to the strengthening of international response capabilities for infectious disease outbreaks, whether natural or deliberate in origin;
- Exploration of means to prepare for, respond to and render assistance in case of the possible hostile use of biological agents and toxins against agriculture, livestock as well as the natural environment.

MX.5 (1 day): Institutional Strengthening of the Convention:

- Consideration of the full range of approaches and options to further strengthen the Convention and its functioning, through possible additional legal measures or other measures, in the framework of the Convention.

6) Each Meeting of Experts will prepare for the consideration of the annual Meeting of States Parties a factual report reflecting its deliberations, including possible outcomes. All meetings, both of Experts and of States Parties will reach any conclusions or results by consensus. The Meeting of States Parties will be responsible for managing the intersessional programme, including taking necessary measures with respect to budgetary and financial matters by consensus with a view to ensuring the proper implementation of the intersessional programme. The Ninth Review Conference will consider the work and outcomes it receives from the Meetings of States Parties and the Meetings of Experts and decide by consensus on any inputs from the intersessional programme and on any further action.

VI. Financial matters

21. The meeting considered financial matters under item 9 of its agenda. Noting with concern the financial situation of the Convention on account inter alia of systemic issues with the current funding arrangements as well as arrears in payment of assessed contributions, the Meeting requested the Chairman of the 2018 Meeting of States Parties to prepare an Information Paper in consultation with the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Implementation Support Unit and States Parties and keeping in view the experience of other such Conventions and relevant organisations on measures to ensure financial predictability and sustainability for the meetings agreed by the States Parties and for the Implementation Support Unit for review by States Parties in 2018.

VII. Documentation

22. A list of official documents of the Meeting of States Parties, including the working papers submitted by States Parties, is contained in annex II to this report. All documents on this list are available on the BWC website at <http://www.unog.ch/bwc> and through the United Nations Official Document System (ODS), at <http://documents.un.org>.

VIII. Conclusion of the Meeting of States Parties

23. At its closing meeting on 8 December 2017, the Meeting of States Parties adopted its report by consensus, as contained in document BWC/MSP/2017/CRP.2, as orally amended, to be issued as document BWC/MSP/2017/5.