

BWC Meeting of States Parties (10-14 December 2007)

Brief for the Chairman – Opening Session (10:00 10 December)

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, I would now like to open the Meeting of States Parties. I extend a warm welcome to you all, and especially to those who have travelled from capitals to participate in this important meeting. I would also like to welcome our distinguished guests: Dr. Bernard Vallat, Director-General of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), Dr. David Heymann, Assistant Director-General, World Health Organization, and Mr. José Sumpsi, Assistant Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization. They will be joined tomorrow by Mr. Ronald Noble, Secretary-General of Interpol, and Mr. Rogelio Pfirter, Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. I am sure all States Parties will join me in welcoming these special guests to our meeting, and thanking them for taking the time to come to share their perspectives with us personally.

If I may move straight on to business, I would like to address administrative and procedural matters first. I will then make a few personal remarks before inviting our guests to address the meeting, and then opening the floor for the general debate.

(agenda)

The first item we have to deal with is the adoption of the agenda. The provisional agenda has been distributed in all languages as document BWC/MSP/2007/1. I hope all delegations have a copy. The substantive parts

of the agenda, items 6 to 9, have been taken directly from the decision of the Sixth Review Conference, which forms the mandate for our work.

May I take it that the agenda, as contained in BWC/MSP/2007/1, is acceptable for adoption?

It is so decided.

(programme of work)

I would like to move now to item 3 of the agenda, the adoption of the programme of work. The provisional programme of work has been distributed in all languages as document BWC/MSP/2007/2. It has been developed in the usual way following consultations with the regional groups and individual delegations. The programme provides a structure for the short time available to us over this week, but is sufficiently flexible to allow us to deal with whichever aspects of the topics we consider may be relevant.

I would like to point out that, as in previous meetings, the programme includes both public and private sessions. The public sessions include those where we will be hearing from international organisations, industry representatives, and NGOs. The private sessions are for delegations of States Parties and signatories only. Of course, we will be able to adjust the distribution of open and working sessions as we need, according to the content of the session and the wishes of States Parties. In particular, I would like to note at this stage that tomorrow we will open in public session in the morning to hear the address of the Secretary-General of Interpol, and again in the afternoon to hear the address of the Director-General of the OPCW. The remainder of both sessions will be private, as noted on the programme of work.

As we learned during the Meeting of Experts, our two topics are quite closely related and there is a degree of overlap and interlinking between them. The division in the programme of work is therefore indicative in nature, and we will adjust the schedule according to the way our work develops.

I would also like to draw your attention to the time that has been set aside for NGOs this afternoon, and for industry representatives on Thursday morning. I will come back to the specific arrangements for these sessions later: for now we are considering just the scheduling.

With these understandings, may I take it that the programme of work, as contained in BWC/MSP/2007/2, is adopted?

It is so decided.

(documents)

I would like to draw delegations' attention at this point to three documents that we will be referring to in the course of our work. The first is the paper I prepared which consolidates and synthesises the ideas and proposals put forward by delegations at the Meeting of Experts. This synthesis paper was circulated to States Parties by letter on 18 October 2007, and is now available in all languages as document BWC/MSP/2007/L.1. As I explained in my letter, and as I have discussed informally in my consultations with the regional groups, the purpose of this document is to support our work here at this Meeting of States Parties. Delegations are welcome to discuss and refer to the paper, to use it as a basis for developing common understandings, or to ignore it, as they wish. It is a resource we have at our disposal, that we can use in the way we

find most productive. It is certainly not an exhaustive inventory, and delegations are most welcome to make additional proposals.

The second document is the report of the Implementation Support Unit, BWC/MSP/2007/3. This has been prepared by the ISU in accordance with the decision of the Sixth Review Conference, and we will consider it on Thursday when we come to item 9 of our agenda.

The third document is my report on universalization activities, which is not yet available as I am awaiting some last-minute information for inclusion. It will be issued shortly as document BWC/MSP/2007/4, and we will also consider it on Thursday, under agenda item 8. Delegations will have seen an informal interim version that was distributed in the regional group meetings on 14 November.

Also on the topic of documentation, delegations will recall that we have a very limited translation budget. I would remind delegations that, as was the case in previous meetings, all working papers submitted during this meeting will be reproduced in the language of submission only. The report and any other substantive products of this meeting will of course be translated into all official languages.

I would also like to remind delegations that all official documents are available electronically on the BWC website, accessible at <http://www.unog.ch/bwc>. Up-to-date information will be posted on the website as soon as available. I would like to encourage delegates to look at the website as regularly as possible.

(rules of procedure)

Turning now to agenda item 4, adoption of the rules of procedure, I would propose that we continue the practice adopted at the Meeting of Experts to operate under the rules of procedure of the Sixth Review Conference, applied *mutatis mutandis*. These rules of procedure are included in the Final Document of the Sixth Review Conference, BWC/CONF.VI/6, should delegations wish to refer to them. There are various rules, such as those dealing with subsidiary bodies and office-holders, which will not apply to this meeting. In particular, I would like to confirm that **formal credentials are not required** for participation in the Meeting of States Parties. Delegations need only register in the usual way by sending a note verbale to the Implementation Support Unit.

With these understandings, may I take it that the Meeting agrees to operate under the rules of procedure of the Sixth Review Conference, as specified in BWC/CONF.VI/6, applied *mutatis mutandis*?

It is so decided.

Thank you. I would now like to deal with the matter of participation, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.

First, one state neither party nor signatory to the Convention, **Israel**, has requested observer status in accordance with rule 44, paragraph 2 of the rules of procedure. May I take it that the Meeting agrees to this request?

It is so decided.

As I mentioned earlier, the heads of several international organisations been kind enough to accept my invitation to participate personally in our meeting and share their perspectives on the important issues we are dealing with. Several

other international organisations have indicated they would like to participate at working level. I would consequently like to propose that the following **eight** organisations be granted observer agency status in accordance with rule 44, paragraph 4 of the Rules of Procedure:

1. European Commission
2. Food and Agriculture Organization
3. International Committee of the Red Cross
4. Interpol
5. League of Arab States
6. Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
7. World Health Organization
8. World Organisation for Animal Health

May I take it that the Meeting approves this proposal?

It is so decided.

That brings us to NGOs, and the special arrangements I mentioned earlier. As I have discussed informally in my consultations with the regional groups, I believe that constructive engagement with civil society is a vital component of effective national implementation of the BWC. With this in mind, it is desirable to engage civil society in a more effective manner at this meeting. In particular, I would like to give States Parties the chance to hear the views of commercial industry, as this is a voice that has so far been rather lacking in our deliberations. I am therefore proposing two special informal sessions of our meeting. One will be this afternoon, when I will invite six NGO representatives to engage in a dialogue with the Chair. The second will be on Thursday

morning, when four industry representatives will join me for a similar exchange.

Both these sessions will begin with an interactive discussion between myself and the invited participants. This will be followed by an opportunity for delegations to ask questions of the participants. I encourage delegations to make the most of this opportunity to explore different ideas and perspectives on the topics we are considering. I emphasise that these will be informal meetings, and will not change the formal status of participation for NGOs or anyone else in the BWC meetings and conferences. The discussions will not be included in the report of the meeting. We are also not setting any precedent: it will be up to future meetings to decide if and how to continue to engage civil society in our work.

The NGO interactive discussion this afternoon will be followed, subject to time constraints, by the traditional opportunity for other NGOs to make brief statements in this room.

With these understandings, may I take it that the Meeting decides to hold these two special informal sessions as described?

It is so decided.

Thank you. I would like to remind you that as well as the meetings in this room, a number of lunchtime presentations have been planned, which delegations may find to be of interest.

I would also like to inform you that we have with us this week a team from Transformer Films, a documentary film-making company, which has been

commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the European ARTE network to produce a film on the international response to bio-terrorism. They will be filming during public sessions of our meeting, and may also approach delegates for interviews. I think this is a good opportunity for informing the wider public of the importance of our work, and I encourage delegations to share their views freely if approached by the Transformer Films team.

That concludes the formal procedural matters we had to resolve. But before we move on, I would like to say a few words about the substantive part of our work, and the outcome of this meeting. As I said at the Meeting of Experts, we have the benefit this year of building not only on the productive work of the 2003-2005 meetings, but also on the successful outcome of the Sixth Review Conference. That will help us in several ways: we have a consensus final document embodying a shared vision of the Convention, we have the ISU, and we have demonstrated our common purpose and willingness to resolve our differences in constructive and creative ways. The Meeting of Experts showed that States Parties continue to approach our various challenges in a collaborative, collegial spirit, and the wealth of material presented at that meeting shows the impressive resources we can muster when we work in concert.

We now have to distil the excellent work of the Meeting of Experts into a more concentrated product. We will be working on the same basis as in previous years, on the same understandings about the scope of our mandate. Our task is to "promote common understanding and effective action", not to negotiate binding agreements. All views and perspectives are welcome. We are not trying to exclude any points of view. States Parties will have different priorities, but all these can be reflected in a fair and transparent manner.

My view is that we should aim for a product that genuinely promotes common understanding and that will help States Parties, including those which are not able to participate in our meetings, to take effective action on our two topics. I think we should keep an open mind on the exact form of our outcome, and work together to find a way to reflect our common understandings in a clear and accessible product. We should always keep in mind that we are looking to improve our individual and collective capacity to reduce the risk of biological weapons being developed or used. That should be our focus when considering a potential outcome. More specifically, we should ask ourselves: "will this report be a useful, practical tool for governments wanting to improve their implementation of the BWC?"

During the Meeting of Experts, after listening to State Parties, I realized that we needed to focus on three critical areas to change our current state of **adjacency** to **synergy**. I think this should be the theme for our meeting, and you can see it highlighted on the screen above. The States Parties cannot go it alone; do it alone. The three critical areas for collective efforts are: synergy, inclusiveness, and transparency.

First, **synergy**. Several international organizations are working on issues impinging directly or indirectly on the BWC regime. We need to strengthen and improve communication and cooperation with these organizations.

Second, **inclusiveness**. As I have said, it is important to bring in the knowledge and expertise of civil society, and this is what has prompted me to initiate the interactive discussion with NGOs that we will have this afternoon.

Third, **transparency**. Commercial industry is steering and witnessing exponential growth in the areas of bio-technology, which is the next global wave after Information Technology. And BWC States Parties have been busy in developing the normative and operational framework for dealing with deliberate use of the bio-sciences as a weapon. Therefore, it is important that States Parties and industry have more open communication and dialogue to prevent the development, acquisition or use of biological weapons. So I am pleased that we will be able to have an exchange with industry representatives later this week.

That is all I have to say by way of introduction. I am looking forward to a productive and focused meeting, and to working with you all to deliver a useful, practical and concrete outcome. I encourage all delegations to contribute freely to the debate, and I hope we will see a continuation of the very constructive and creative spirit States Parties displayed at the Sixth Review Conference and the Meeting of Experts.

(statements from high-level guests)

Thank you. Before opening the general debate, I would now like to invite our special guests to address the meeting. A particularly consistent message to emerge from the Meeting of Experts was that effective national implementation and regional cooperation require coordinated action from a variety of actors, across different sectors, including security, public health, law enforcement, agriculture, and others. As I noted earlier, more and more we are seeing the need to work closely with organisations such as OIE, FAO and WHO, to find synergies and develop integrated approaches to interlinked problems. I am therefore delighted that the heads of several relevant organisations have kindly agreed to come to our meeting and share their perspectives, from the summit of

their organisations. I hope you will give them a warm welcome and your full attention.

First, it is my pleasure to introduce Dr. Bernard Vallat, the Director-General of the World Organisation for Animal Health, OIE. Dr. Vallat, you have the floor.

(Dr. Vallat to address the meeting)

Thank you, Dr. Vallat, for a most interesting and relevant presentation, which I think highlights exactly the sorts of opportunities and challenges we should be considering. If you agree, I would like to give delegations the chance to ask a few questions. Would any delegation like to comment on Dr. Vallat's presentation or ask a question?

(take questions from the floor)

Thank you, that seems to be all. Dr. Vallat, on behalf of all States Parties, I would like to thank you most sincerely for joining us this morning, and for contributing in such a thoughtful and insightful way to our work. We do appreciate the excellent degree of cooperation we have enjoyed with OIE over the past few years, and we look forward to further strengthening our links and cooperation.

Now I would like to introduce our second distinguished guest this morning, Dr. David Heymann, representing the World Health Organization. Dr. Heymann is the Assistant Director-General for Health Security and Environment and Representative of the Director-General for Polio Eradication. Dr. Heymann has addressed BWC meetings in the past, and it is a great pleasure to offer you the floor once more.

(Dr. Heymann to address the meeting)

Thank you, Dr. Heymann, for your presentation which illustrates very clearly the linkages between the respective goals of the WHO and BWC, and which highlights some of the areas on which we might focus our efforts for coordination and collaboration.

(Depending on time - Heymann must leave at 11:45: I understand that Dr. Heymann is on a tight schedule this morning, and must leave very shortly. We have perhaps time for one or two questions.)

On behalf of all States Parties I would like to thank you for coming here to share your views, and I hope you will convey our gratitude to the Director-General of WHO. Dr. Margaret Chan, and assure her of the commitment of the BWC States Parties to working closely with the WHO in coming years.

It is now my pleasure to introduce our third special guest, Mr. José Sumpsi, Assistant Director-General, Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department of the Food and Agriculture Organization. Mr. Sumpsi, you have the floor.

(Mr. Sumpsi to address the meeting)

Thank you, Mr. Sumpsi, for your comprehensive and highly relevant presentation, which indeed picked up on many of the themes raised by Dr. Vallat. If I may, I would like once again to give States Parties the opportunity to ask questions. Would any delegation like to take the floor?

(take questions from floor)

Thank you, that seems to be all. Mr. Sumpsi, allow me to thank you on behalf of all States Parties for travelling here to contribute to our work, and for offering your thoughts and perspectives. I hope you will also convey our gratitude to the Director-General of FAO, Dr. Jacques Diouf, as well as our resolve to continue to work together with FAO to strengthen cooperation and further our common goals.

Thank you again to both our guests. Let me remind delegations that tomorrow morning we will have the honour of receiving the Secretary-General of Interpol, Mr. Ronald Noble, and tomorrow afternoon, the Director-General of the OPCW, Mr. Rogelio Pfirter.

Now I would like to move on to item 5 of our agenda, and open the general debate. I have the following speakers on my list... (see list)
