

OBTAINING UNIVERSALITY FOR THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

Introducing the Report of the Chairman

Good afternoon Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

We now turn our attention to item number 8 of our agenda: *Reports from the Chairman and States Parties on universalization activities*.

At the Sixth Review Conference last year, the States Parties agreed that a concerted effort was needed to persuade states not party to join the Convention. With this in mind, we agreed to undertake a number of specific tasks to increase the membership of the BWC. We agreed to promote universalization through bilateral contacts as well as regional and multilateral forums and activities. We decided to nominate points of contact for this important issue, to inform the ISU of our activities and to report, as appropriate, to the Meetings of States Parties. The Sixth Review Conference also mandated the Chair of Meetings of States Parties to coordinate universalization efforts. Part of this mandate was to report back to meetings, such as this one, on progress made to date. To support us all in this task, we also charged the Implementation Support Unit with a number of specific tasks.

It is with great pleasure that in pursuit of these goals, and in accordance with the decision of the Sixth Review Conference, I introduce to you the *Report of the Chairman on Universalization Activities* (BWC/MSP/2007/4). This report contains the information made available to myself, as well as the ISU, from the various universalization initiatives conducted throughout 2007.

As we have heard on several occasions this week, increasing the membership of the BWC is a priority task. The objective of the BWC - a complete and total ban on biological weapons – cannot be achieved as long as States remain outside of its provisions. During the course of this year, universalization of the BWC is a topic to which I have devoted considerable time and effort. I have written several times to the Foreign Ministers of states not currently party to the BWC, urging them to accede at the earliest possible opportunity. I have written similar letters to the Foreign Ministers of all of the signatory states, requesting that they too consider ratifying the Convention as soon as possible.

But I have not left it there. While information technology has made communication amongst ourselves much easier, it is not yet a real alternative to meeting with people face to face. For this reason, I have engaged and met in person with representatives and delegations from states not party. I have held bilateral meetings with representatives of as many states as I could on the margins of the First Committee in New York. I have held events and consultations here in Geneva with the local missions of states not party. I have seized every opportunity to engage with these states and discuss the possibility of their joining the Convention.

I have also attempted to coordinate my efforts with those of States Parties. I believe that using multiple channels to deliver a harmonized, collective message will ultimately prove a successful strategy. We truly have many strings to our bow - so many in fact that keeping abreast of them all is a challenge in itself. This is where the support of the ISU has been of particular use. The Unit has been working to keep us informed of where we are and what has been happening. Such information has been available on the ISU's website. Throughout the year, the ISU

has also helped us by compiling interim reports, such as the one I presented to the Meeting of Experts in August, and updates, such as the one I presented to the regional groups last month. While most of the information contained in these reports has either been provided by States Parties or generated by my activities, some has been obtained by the ISU itself in its efforts to support our universalization activities. In November this year, two members of the ISU travelled to The Hague in the Netherlands to attend the Ninth Meeting of National Authorities to the OPCW, in order to find out from states which are members of the Chemical Weapons Convention but not of the BWC, where they stand with regard to joining our Convention. I would like to take this moment to record my gratitude to the staff of the ISU, Mr. Richard Lennane, Dr. Piers Millett, and Ms. Ngoc Phuong Huynh, and thank them for their hard work throughout the year supporting my efforts on universalization.

We will hear, later this morning, details of a number of important initiatives undertaken by States Parties to promote universalization, including the very extensive activities undertaken by the European Union. Before, however, opening the floor to hear more on these efforts, I would like to complete my mandated tasks by giving you an overview of the results to date of our universalization activities.

First the good news – during the 12 months since we dedicated ourselves to concerted efforts to universalize the BWC, four States have joined the BWC: Gabon, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, and Trinidad and Tobago. I wrote to the Foreign Ministers of these four states in October of this year to welcome them to the Convention, to thank them for joining, and to congratulate them on taking this important step.

This is a good start, and we should feel encouraged. But there are still 36 states not party. At our current rate, if it could be sustained, it would take nine years to reach universality. Do we want to wait until the Eighth Review Conference, which is where nine years will take us, before we are even approaching universality? Can we be patient until 2016 to reach a point already attained by other treaties, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention? These are questions that we should keep in mind over the coming months and years as we work on universalization. I believe that we have made a solid start, but we must intensify our efforts.

There are signs that we can do more and that our efforts would not be wasted. Universalization activities to date suggest that there are five states in which accession or ratification processes are well advanced: Burundi, Comoros, Madagascar, Mozambique and Myanmar. These countries appear to be ripe for accession. It appears that Burundi has taken the decision to join the BWC and has even completed all the domestic steps necessary for full membership. It remains only for an appropriate Instrument of Ratification to be provided to a Depository. The news is also good from the Comoros – where the necessary domestic measures have been drafted, that these measures have successfully passed through an extraordinary session of the Council of Government and are currently awaiting signature by the President of the Comoros. Madagascar too has been drafting necessary domestic measures. These measures were due to be discussed in the national assembly last month. If they were adopted, we were informed, then Madagascar would only need to draw up an instrument of ratification. On several occasions representatives from Mozambique have informed us that the domestic processes were at an advanced stage and that they should be concluded soon. Myanmar too looks likely to join the BWC in the near future. It is our understanding that all the necessary domestic measures had been completed and

that the issue was at the "highest level" for consideration and approval. I am hopeful that the next time a Chair reports to you on universality that all these states will be full members of the BWC.

A further eight states have indicated that they have started the accession or ratification process but that their efforts are not quite so fully developed. These are Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Namibia, Nepal, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia. Cameroon is currently considering a draft law on the BWC and is particularly keen to be advised what the ramifications would be for them of joining the Convention. Côte d'Ivoire has indicated that although it has taken many of the domestic steps necessary to join the BWC, an internal political crisis has prevented progress being made in its parliament. Guinea has taken steps in the executive to start the accession process but rapidly discovered that an outreach and sensitization process for national stakeholders would be required before any further headway could be made. Nepal too has begun to take steps but has pointed out that the time frame for joining was largely a question of priority and that should technical assistance be available then it might be possible to bypass some delays. A similar message was also heard from Zambia - indicating that while the necessary procedures have been initiated, resource constraints were limiting progress. As we heard from the distinguished Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday, the UAE has begun ratification procedures. And representatives from Namibia and the United Republic of Tanzania indicated that they had begun the steps to join the BWC. Andorra is in a slightly different category: Andorra has not started formal processes to accede, but feedback indicates the government is eager to join the Convention, even if the formal processes have not yet begun.

There are clearly opportunities here for us as States Parties to do more to help these states join the BWC as soon as possible.

There is another group of states that have not yet started the ratification or accession process, in many cases because waiting for further information or assistance, or because the issue does not have a high enough priority. These are Angola, Central African Republic, Chad, Cook Islands, Guyana, Liberia, Malawi, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, and Niue. For the most part, these states noted the information we provided and said that it would be sent on to capital. Many of these states indicated that they would need assistance to undertake any commitment towards the BWC.

This group of states represents the largest test of our dedication to universalization of this Convention. Our interactions with representatives from these states have revealed a need for specific assistance in facilitating their efforts to join the BWC. The message they have sent us is clear and concise – they need our help. If we want to bring them on board in the near future, we will have to provide this help. I would therefore encourage all of the States Parties gathered here, as well as those unable to attend this meeting, to see if you can locate any capacity to provide such assistance. In line with my theme for this week – from *adjacency* to *synergy* - I would encourage you to get in touch with the ISU to discuss these matters further but at least keep the Unit informed of what assistance you can, or are providing. This way we can ensure that our efforts will indeed be synergistic, and optimize the use of our resources by minimizing duplication or repetition of efforts.

Three states (Egypt, Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic) have all provided information indicating that because of particular regional security circumstances,

no action on ratification should be expected in the near future. While these states have said that they will be unlikely to join the BWC soon, they all, individually, indicated that they supported the aims and objectives of the Convention.

Furthermore, they all indicated that they would attend and participate in meetings of the BWC as actively as possible. It is a pleasure, therefore, to have seen their representatives in this room, this week. As States Parties, we should keep the channels of communication open, and work to persuade these states that joining the Convention would in fact contribute to regional security, stability and peace.

Perhaps the clearest indicator that we still have work to do and that we must work harder and more effectively in pursuit of universality comes from the eight states for which we still lack information. We have not received any information or feedback from Djibouti, Eritrea, Haiti, Kiribati, Mauritania, Samoa, Somalia, or Tuvalu.

All these details can be found in my report, which is available in all languages as document BWC/MSP/2007/4. I hope you will find it a useful contribution to our future efforts to promote universalization. On this note, I would like to make some comments on what I think should be our next steps. First, we need to leverage the authority of the Chair, and really use the Chair's role as representative of all 159 States Parties to wield political and moral influence. Second, we should support the activities of the ISU on universalization. Third, we should support initiatives by regional groups, individual states, and NGOs. Fourth, we should hold events in Geneva and New York, which are the hubs of diplomatic activities, and take every opportunity to talk to the permanent representatives of states not party. Fifth, we should introduce universalization as a prominent theme in BW-related seminars in Geneva and elsewhere.

Coordinating these renewed efforts will fall to my successor, the Chair of the 2008 meetings. I would like to wish the new Chair every success in these important endeavours, and I assure the new Chair, and all States Parties, of my continuing personal support, and the support of the Government of Pakistan, for activities to secure universal adherence to the Convention.

This brings me to the end of my introduction, and I will now open the floor to hear from States Parties own reports on their activities to promote universalization. I would also encourage the delegations from any signatory or observer states that are in the room, to take the floor during this session to inform States Parties of their situation and intentions. You too are invited to contact the ISU to discuss further what assistance could help your state to become a member of the Biological Weapons Convention.
