



Permanent Mission of Italy
UN - Geneva



PERMANENT MISSION OF ROMANIA
to the United Nations Office at Geneva
and the International Organizations in Switzerland

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

Geneva, 18 March 2022

Excellency,

We have the honour of writing to you in our capacity as Vice-Chairpersons of the Preparatory Committee to the Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention.

As we informed you in our letter dated 14 March 2022, the Preparatory Committee will proceed as agreed at the Meeting of States Parties last year and will resume its work from 4-11 April 2022 in Geneva. The Implementation Support Unit has already circulated information on the practical arrangements for the meeting and we would encourage all delegations to register as soon as possible.

With regard to the nomination of the Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee, as you heard in the informal consultations that we convened on 11 March 2022, the coordinator of the Eastern European Group has not received any expressions of interest from the members of the Group. At the same meeting, the coordinator of the Western Group informed that the Group would need more time to discuss the matter within the Group.

It is therefore unlikely that a Chairperson-Designate for the Preparatory Committee will be nominated before it reconvenes on 4 April 2022. In this situation, we are therefore preparing to chair the meeting, as we did with the opening meeting of the Preparatory Committee on 20 December 2021.

We would like to thank States Parties for the professional and constructive manner in which they handled the first session of the Preparatory Committee, which allowed us to conduct our work in a collegial spirit. We hope this bodes well for our continued work in April and for the Review Conference itself.

Programme of work

In this letter, we would like to share with you how we plan to approach the upcoming Preparatory Committee. As you will recall, the Meeting of States Parties agreed that the meeting in April would "consider the agenda items on general exchange of views and provide an opportunity for States Parties to consider comprehensively all provisions of the Convention." Given that we will have a total of six days of meeting time, it is our intention to prepare a programme of work, and a first draft is attached to this letter.

We will resume the meeting on 4 April 2022 and then proceed immediately to agenda item 5, the "general exchange of views". Once this item has been concluded, our intention would be to switch to an informal session in order to hear brief statements from speakers from non-governmental organizations, as has been the practice at many previous BWC meetings. We imagine that the "general exchange of views", including the informal session, could take up most, if not all, of the first day of our meeting, and maybe even extend into the second day.

Once agenda item 5 has been completed, we would then propose to move on to the main substantive agenda item, namely item 7 on “comprehensive consideration of all provisions of the Convention”. We propose to proceed as the Preparatory Committee for the Eighth Review Conference did in 2016. The articles of the Convention provide a natural structure to this agenda item, so our deliberations should be structured in accordance with the articles of the Convention using a rolling schedule. Those States Parties who see close linkages between certain articles of the Convention may clarify that during the discussion. Such an approach should provide for a balanced and well-structured discussion during the meeting.

As in 2016, we would also suggest focusing some time on those topics which do not fit neatly into the natural structure of the articles of the Convention. For example, questions relating to any future intersessional programme after the Review Conference, or to the strengthening of the Implementation Support Unit. We could discuss such “cross-cutting” issues once we have concluded the discussion on the articles of the Convention.

In order to have the most productive discussion under agenda item 7, we encourage delegations to come to the meeting with concrete proposals for consideration by the Review Conference. Many interesting proposals were tabled during the intersessional programme, and it is clear that a lot of time and effort has gone into their development. In some areas where there were a number of proposals, there appears to be a degree of convergence of ideas. We hope that interested States Parties will consider the option of working together informally in the coming months in order to identify mutually acceptable approaches in their proposals.

Following our discussions on issues of substance, we would suggest to then address the remaining procedural issues under agenda item 6 on “organization of the Review Conference”. Informal consultations on these issues could take place during the Preparatory Committee so that the meeting will hopefully be able to formally adopt the required decisions by 11 April 2022. As you will recall, we reached general understandings at our meeting in December 2021 on several such issues, and it appeared that there was no objection to adopting formal decisions on them in accordance with standard practice at our resumed session. These relate to the distribution of posts among the various regional groups, the draft provisional agenda for the Review Conference, various issues relating to the draft rules of procedure of the Review Conference and possible additional background information documents.

However, an additional two procedural issues will also need to be addressed. The first relates to the nomination of the Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee to which we have already referred above. If a nomination is forthcoming before or during the meeting, we can return to agenda item 2 on “election of the Chairperson and other officers” and elect a Chairperson for the meeting who will also be the President-Designate of the Review Conference. The second issue relates to the dates for the Ninth Review Conference. As you will recall, the Meeting of States Parties agreed that the Review Conference would take place in Geneva from 8-26 August 2022. However, in the meantime, States Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty have agreed that its Tenth Review Conference should take place in New York from 1-26 August 2022, thereby overlapping with the Ninth Review Conference. Many delegations expressed concern about this situation at the informal meetings that we convened on 11 February and 11 March 2022.

Summary report

At the conclusion of the meeting of the Preparatory Committee, a summary report is to be produced for consideration of delegations ahead of the Ninth Review Conference. According to the decision of the Meeting of States Parties, such a responsibility lies on the Chairperson and the summary report shall be without prejudice to the perspectives, recommendations, conclusions and proposals presented by delegations and should not prejudice the final outcome of the Review Conference. In the absence of a Chairperson, should the States Parties decide to confer this mandate to us, our intention is for this document to be brief and factual, so to assist States Parties in their preparations for the Review Conference.

Background documentation

Our discussions in April will be informed by the background documentation, which the Preparatory Committee in December requested the ISU to prepare on the following five topics:

- The history and operation of the confidence-building measures agreed at the Second Review Conference and revised at the Third and Seventh Review Conferences;
- The overall financial status of the Convention and implications of proposals for follow-on action after the Ninth Review Conference;
- The additional understandings and agreements reached by previous Review Conferences relating to each article of the Convention;
- The common understandings reached by the Meetings of States Parties during the intersessional programme held from 2017 to 2020; and
- The status of universalization of the Convention.

These documents are available, in all official languages, on the BWC website at <https://meetings.unoda.org/section/bwc-prepcom-2021-documents/>. We hope that they will contribute towards constructive discussions at the meeting.

As you will recall, a further three background documents are to be compiled by the ISU from inputs provided by States Parties and will be ready, in all official languages, in advance of the Review Conference itself. These three documents will address the following topics:

- Compliance by States Parties with all their obligations under the Convention;
- The implementation of Article VII; and
- The implementation of Article X, including information submitted pursuant to paragraph 61 of the Final Declaration of the Seventh Review Conference.

On 17 March 2022, the ISU sent a letter to all States Parties which sets out the process for the submission and production of these three papers. We would like to encourage all States Parties to submit inputs to these papers to the ISU in good time, and certainly before the 31 May 2022 deadline.

Sponsorship programme

We would like to thank Canada, France and the European Union for their contributions to the sponsorship programme this year. We encourage as many States Parties as possible to contribute to the Sponsorship Programme, since it is very important to have a diverse and representative participation in the Review Conference.

We would be grateful to receive comments and feedback on the contents of this letter and the approaches outlined above. We also remain available for consultations at any time and can be contacted via the ISU.

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


Tancredi Francese


Florian Antohi