

**Meeting 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**

8 October 2019

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**2019 Meeting
Geneva, 3-6 December 2019**

**Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness
Geneva, 6-7 August 2019
Item 10 of the Agenda
Adoption of the factual report reflecting the deliberations
of the meeting, including possible outcomes**

**Report of the 2019 Meeting of Experts on
assistance, response and preparedness***

I. Introduction

1. At 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](#)), States Parties decided to hold annual meetings and that the first such meeting, in December 2017, would 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.
2. At the Meeting of States Parties in December 2017, States Parties reached consensus on the following:
 - “(a) Reaffirming previous intersessional programmes from 2003-2015 and retaining the previous structures: annual Meetings of States Parties preceded by annual Meetings of Experts.
 - (b) 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.
 - (c) 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.

* Any entry listed in this document does not imply the expression of any opinion regarding, and is without prejudice to, the legal status of any country or territory or of its authorities.



(d) 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 [the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States Parties to the BWC] (MX 1 and MX 2) and the Western Group (MX 3 and MX 4), in 2019 by EEG (MX 1 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>
2018	EEG	NAM	NAM	WG	WG	EEG
2019	WG	EEG	EEG	NAM	NAM	WG
2020	NAM	WG	WG	EEG	EEG	NAM

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

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

[...]

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.

[...]

(f) 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.”

3. By resolution [73/87](#), adopted without a vote on 5 December 2018, 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 Experts

4. In accordance with the decisions of the Eighth Review Conference and the 2017 Meeting of States Parties, the 2019 Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness was convened at the Palais des Nations in Geneva from 6 to 7 August 2019, chaired by Mr. Usman Iqbal Jadoon of Pakistan.

5. The Meeting of Experts adopted its agenda ([BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/1](#)) as proposed by the Chair.

6. Following a suggestion by the Chair, the Meeting of Experts adopted as its rules of procedure, *mutatis mutandis*, the rules of procedure of the Eighth Review Conference, as contained in document [BWC/CONF.VIII/2](#).

7. Mr. Daniel Feakes, Chief, Implementation Support Unit, Office for Disarmament Affairs, Geneva, served as Secretary of the Meeting of Experts. Mr. Hermann Lampalzer, Political Affairs Officer, Implementation Support Unit, served as Deputy Secretary and Ms. Ngoc Phuong van der Blij, Political Affairs Officer, also served in the secretariat.

III. Participation at the Meeting of Experts

8. Ninety-six delegations participated in the Meeting of Experts as follows: Afghanistan; Algeria; Angola; Argentina; Armenia; Australia; Austria; Belarus; Belgium; Bolivia (Plurinational State of); Botswana; Brazil; Bulgaria; Burkina Faso; Canada; Chile; China; Colombia; Costa Rica; Côte d'Ivoire; Cuba; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Dominican Republic; Ecuador; El Salvador; Estonia; Ethiopia; Finland; France; Georgia; Germany; Greece; Guatemala; Holy See; Honduras; Hungary; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Iraq; Ireland; Italy; Japan; Jordan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Kyrgyzstan; Lao (People's Democratic Republic); Latvia; Lebanon; Libya; Malaysia; Mali; Mexico; Montenegro; Morocco; Mozambique; Myanmar; Nepal; Netherlands; Nigeria; North Macedonia; Pakistan; Peru; Philippines; Poland; Portugal; Qatar; Republic of Korea; Romania; Russian Federation; Saudi Arabia; Senegal; Serbia; Slovakia; South Africa; Spain; Sri Lanka; State of Palestine; Sweden; Switzerland; Tajikistan; Thailand; Trinidad and Tobago; Turkey; Uganda; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United States of America; Uruguay; Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of); Yemen; and Zimbabwe.

9. In addition, three States that had signed the Convention but had not yet ratified it participated in the Meeting of Experts without taking part in the making of decisions, as provided for in rule 44, paragraph 1 of the rules of procedure: Egypt; Haiti; United Republic of Tanzania.

10. One State, Israel, neither a party nor a signatory to the Convention, participated in the Meeting of Experts as an observer, in accordance with rule 44, paragraph 2.

11. The United Nations, including the Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), attended the Meeting of Experts in accordance with rule 44, paragraph 3.

12. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the European Union (EU), the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) were granted observer status to participate in the Meeting of Experts in accordance with rule 44, paragraph 4.

13. In addition, at the invitation of the Chair, in recognition of the special nature of the topics under consideration at this Meeting and without creating a precedent, an independent expert participated in informal exchanges in the open sessions as a Guest of the Meeting of Experts: Dr Rebecca Katz of Georgetown University.

14. Thirty-one non-governmental organizations and research institutes attended the Meeting of Experts under rule 44, paragraph 5.

15. A list of all participants in the Meeting of Experts is contained in document [BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/INF.1](#).

IV. Work of the Meeting of Experts

16. In accordance with the provisional agenda ([BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/1](#)) and an annotated programme of work prepared by the Chair, the Meeting of Experts had substantive discussions on the issues allocated by the 2017 Meeting of States Parties.

17. Under agenda item 4 (“Practical challenges facing the implementation of Article VII, and possible solutions”), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland introduced a working paper ([BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/WP.6](#)) and Dr. Rebecca Katz of Georgetown University made a technical presentation as a Guest of the Meeting. There then followed an interactive discussion on the agenda item in which the following States Parties participated: Brazil; China; Ecuador; India; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Pakistan; Russian Federation; Switzerland; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United States of America; Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) on behalf of the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States Parties to the BWC.¹ The European Union also made a statement. Various views were expressed during the consideration of this agenda item.

18. Under agenda item 5 (“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”), there was an interactive discussion on the agenda item in which the following States Parties participated: Brazil; China; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Russian Federation; South Africa; Switzerland; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United States of America; Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) on behalf of the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States Parties to the BWC. Various views were expressed during the consideration of this agenda item.

19. Under agenda item 6 (“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 World Health Organization (WHO), World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), as appropriate”), there was a technical presentation by the European Union.² There then followed an interactive discussion on the agenda item in which the following States Parties participated: Chile; India; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Russian Federation; Switzerland; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United States of America; Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) on behalf of the Group of the

¹ Notes sent by Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru on the statements delivered by the NAM Chair.

² Technical presentations posted on the webpage of the Meeting of Experts, with the consent of the presenter.

Non-Aligned Movement and Other States Parties to the BWC. The European Union, the International Criminal Police Organization and the World Health Organization also made statements. Various views were expressed during the consideration of this agenda item.

20. Under agenda item 7 (“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”), the Russian Federation made a technical presentation. There then followed an interactive discussion on the agenda item in which the following States Parties participated: Brazil; China; France; Germany; India; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kyrgyzstan; Russian Federation; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Various views were expressed during the consideration of this agenda item.

21. Under agenda item 8 (“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”), Australia and Japan introduced working papers ([BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/WP.2](#), [BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/WP.3](#) and [BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/WP.4](#) respectively). Belgium, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) made technical presentations. There then followed an interactive discussion on the agenda item in which the following States Parties participated: Brazil; China; Germany; India; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Kenya; Kyrgyzstan; Malaysia; Portugal; Switzerland; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United States of America; Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) on behalf of the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States Parties to the BWC. The European Union and the International Criminal Police Organization also made statements. Various views were expressed during the consideration of this agenda item.

22. Under agenda item 9 (“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”), the United States of America and Canada introduced working papers ([BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/WP.1](#) and [BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/WP.5](#) respectively). The Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) made a technical presentation. There then followed an interactive discussion on the agenda item in which the following States Parties participated: Brazil; China; Japan; Netherlands; Republic of Korea; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United States of America. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) also made statements. Various views were expressed during the consideration of this agenda item.

23. In the course of its work, the Meeting of Experts 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 Guest of the Meeting, which were circulated in the Meeting.

24. The Chair, under his own responsibility and initiative, has prepared a paper listing considerations, lessons, perspectives, recommendations, conclusions and proposals drawn from the presentations, statements, working papers and interventions on the agenda items under discussion at the Meeting. The Meeting of Experts noted that this paper had not been agreed and had no status. It was the Chair’s view that the paper could assist delegations in their preparations for the Meeting of States Parties in December 2019 and those in the remaining year of the intersessional programme and in the Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness in the intersessional programme in 2020 and also in their consideration of how best to “discuss, and promote common understanding and effective action on” the topics in accordance with the consensus reached at the 2017 Meeting of States Parties. The paper prepared by the Chair, in consultation with States Parties, is attached as Annex I to this report.

V. Documentation

25. A list of official documents of the Meeting of Experts, 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>.

VI. Conclusion of the Meeting of Experts

26. At its closing meeting on 7 August 2019, the Meeting of Experts adopted its report by consensus, as contained in document BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/CRP.1 as orally amended, to be issued as document BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/2.

Annex I

Summary report

Submitted by the Chairman of the Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness

1. The chairperson under his own responsibility and initiative has prepared this paper which lists considerations, perspectives, and conclusions drawn from the presentations, statements, working papers and interventions on the agenda items under discussion at the Meeting of Experts held on 6 and 7 August 2019. The Meeting of Experts noted that this paper had not been agreed and had no status. It was the Chairperson's view, however, that this paper could assist delegations in their preparations for the Meetings of States Parties in December 2019 and 2020 and also in the succeeding Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness in the intersessional programme in 2020.

2. The Chairperson would like to express his gratitude to delegations for their active participation in the Meeting, particularly for the various working papers that were submitted and which together with oral statements and the constructive debate, as well as the interventions by relevant international organizations and the Guest of the Meeting have served as the basis for this summary report. The procedural report of the Meeting details which delegations spoke under the different agenda items, and which delegations introduced working papers, so such information will not be repeated in this summary report.

3. Discussions cut across the different agenda items as some of the agenda items are intertwined. As in 2018, there was broad recognition among delegations about the many challenges that the implementation of Article VII faces, as well as widespread support concerning the need to make progress with its operationalization. Various proposals aimed at contributing towards that goal were presented by States Parties. Broad support in some areas seemed to have emerged during the discussions, which could be built upon in the context of the remaining meetings of the current intersessional programme. The following sections summarize and synthesize substantive discussions under agenda items 4 to 9.

I. Agenda item 4. Practical challenges facing the implementation of Article VII, and possible solutions

4. One State Party presented its working paper under this agenda item. A Guest of the Meeting informed delegations about the outcome of a high-level table-top exercise carried out earlier in the year, which addressed the question of leadership and coordination in the international response to a deliberate biological event. Suggestions concerning, *inter alia*, the designation of a permanent facilitator or unit to coordinate responses to deliberate biological release, as well as enhanced financing for national pandemic preparedness were made.

5. Some States Parties stressed the critical importance of effective command and control for an Article VII response as well as the need to establish and test respective capabilities and plans before an event occurred. The suggestion was also put forward that the Secretary-General of the United Nations should develop a plan to ensure a coordinated response by Member States, the United Nations (UN) and the wider UN system, and other partners to a deliberate release of a biological agent or toxin. Such a plan should also include a time-bound appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General. In this regard, the establishment of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER), which was set up in 2014 in response to the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak in West Africa, as well as the appointment of a UN Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator for the ongoing outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo, were referred to as relevant examples. Some delegations conveyed support for this proposal.

6. Other delegations cautioned against developing such a mechanism and argued that progress in this area should remain within the realm of the Convention. Accordingly, they

rather stressed the need to develop an independent mechanism under the BWC that would allow States Parties to take action in case of a request for assistance pursuant to Article VII. In this connection, some delegations argued that they would see no tension between a mechanism within the Convention and the proposal for a coordination plan and function to be developed by the Secretary-General.

7. The question of whether the delivery of assistance would be dependent upon a decision by the Security Council pursuant to Article VII was also raised during the discussions. Some States Parties expressed the view that the provision of assistance is not contingent upon or dependent on the outcome of an investigation. In this regard, some States Parties made reference to relevant additional understandings and agreements reached at the Eighth Review Conference and previous meetings.

8. Delegations also restated the importance for States Parties to develop their own capacities in the area of response, as well as to understand what type of assistance they need from international organizations and what they require in order to be prepared for receiving such assistance. The importance of national preparedness of States Parties, particularly by having access to new technologies and equipment for detection and response to address emerging biological threats against humans, animals and plants, was also reaffirmed.

II. Agenda item 5. 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

9. Under this agenda item, no new working papers were submitted. However, reference was made to two documents submitted to the 2018 Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness, containing proposals for guidelines for States Parties for the submission of a request of assistance to the Security Council pursuant to Article VII, and possible options for requesting assistance independent of Security Council approval.

10. Concerning the proposed guidelines for requesting assistance under Article VII, broad support was expressed for the proposal under consideration. Some delegations also suggested that the proposed guidelines could be deposited with the Implementation Support Unit and used on an interim basis until procedures were formally adopted. Reference was also made to another working paper submitted to the 2018 Meeting of States Parties, which, *inter alia*, stressed that the request for assistance should not only be submitted to the Security Council, but also be brought to the attention of other States Parties, with the suggestion that circulation of such a notice may be done by the Depositaries acting pursuant to Article XIV of the Convention. As regards possible options for requesting assistance without seeking approval of the Security Council, some delegations noted that the proposal at hand could form the basis for further work, while others observed that this suggestion raised some practical questions and needed additional consideration. States Parties conveyed their readiness to engage further on this issue in order to address those points in the proposal that are still contentious or that require further clarification.

III. Agenda item 6. 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 World Health Organization (WHO), World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), as appropriate

11. Under this agenda item, a number of States Parties as well as representatives from international organizations took the floor. With reference to the establishment of an

assistance database, it was recalled that the Eighth Review Conference supported the establishment of a database open to all States Parties to facilitate assistance under the framework of Article VII. However, the Conference did not provide an explicit instruction to the Implementation Support Unit to establish such a tool nor did it provide the required resources for its development.

12. In this regard, reference was made to a concrete proposal for the establishment of an assistance database by two States Parties. It was recalled that the database could contain, *inter alia*, freely available information concerning various means of protection against biological weapons, a roster of rapid response units and other types of assistance that States Parties could provide in response to a request as well as a list of contact points in States Parties and international organizations. Furthermore, it was noted that the database could be administered by the Implementation Support Unit and a voluntary fund could also be considered for assistance under Article VII. Various States Parties supported the proposal for the establishment of the database. Some delegations, on the other hand, indicated that they would need to consider the proposal further.

13. Some States Parties raised concerns that potential offers of assistance might not be sufficient to match requests, and that it should be better understood how the database could contribute to an efficient response to a request for assistance under Article VII. In this connection, some delegations noted that improving the implementation of Article VII, by measures agreed by all parties, might also require an expansion of functions and staffing of the Implementation Support Unit. Other delegations stressed the close linkage between Article VII and Article X. Some States Parties expressed a view that mechanisms and measures adopted for the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article X would facilitate assistance and support to States Parties for surveillance, detection, diagnosis, treatment and mitigation of disease outbreaks.

14. One technical presentation elaborated on the European Union's Civil Protection Mechanism, which has been activated more than three hundred times to respond to various emergencies around the globe, including recent health, epidemic and biological emergencies. Furthermore, the role and function of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre as well as the Common Emergency Communication and Information System were explained. It was also noted that a set of guidelines is available to facilitate the submission of an assistance request by a State, whereas specific templates are used to capture particular technical aspects of a request. Additionally, INTERPOL provided information about its plans to establish a platform which may act as a global early warning system to track and assess biological risks around the world.

15. Some discussions also took place concerning a proposal to establish a fund for assistance. In this regard, reference was made to the voluntary fund for assistance established pursuant to Article X of the Chemical Weapons Convention. It was suggested that, if a fund for assistance were to be established for the purposes of Article VII of the Convention, contributions could be paid into a special account. Information related to the fund could be reflected in the assistance database with the Implementation Support Unit providing annual reporting about its status. A number of States Parties spoke in favour of establishing such a fund and also stressed the importance of monitoring its implementation. Other States Parties however indicated the need to further study the proposal in more detail.

IV. Agenda item 7 - 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

16. Various States Parties took the floor under this agenda item. While no working paper was submitted on this topic, reference was made to a long-standing proposal, most recently spelled out in a working paper submitted to the 2018 Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness. Delegations also heard a technical presentation by a State Party on this concept, which suggested that mobile bio-medical units could be used to contribute to the implementation of the Convention in three areas, namely in the sphere of international

cooperation and assistance under Article X, in the context of Article VII as well as under Article VI of the Convention.

17. While several delegations stressed the usefulness of the concept of mobile bio-medical units, they also reiterated the need to consider this proposal further. Some States Parties noted that the suggestion to set up and maintain such units under the control of the BWC did not seem practicable, as it would raise various questions of funding for their setup, maintenance and field deployment as well as related staff requirements. In this connection, widespread support was however expressed for listing national units in the Article VII database and thereby making them available for response to biological incidents under the Convention. Some delegations suggested that a roster of such units should be made available via the Implementation Support Unit. The view was also expressed that preference should be given to small, agile field laboratories, which some States have already available. Other delegations also noted that potential lessons could be drawn from the example of the Emergency Medical Teams established within the WHO. Furthermore, the importance of clarifying intellectual property rights concerning samples collected in the field was noted.

18. Various States Parties also shared lessons concerning the establishment of such units at the national level and informed about deployments of these units in the context of fighting Ebola Virus Disease outbreaks. Effective practices concerning the maintenance of a roster of units in the context of Article X of the Chemical Weapons Convention were pointed to as a useful reference also in the context of the BWC.

V. Agenda item 8 - 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

19. Three working papers were introduced by two States Parties and three technical presentations were delivered on this topic. Various delegations took the floor and shared their national experiences concerning strengthening national health systems and national response capabilities, including by means of national response plans, specialized response units, and regular table-top and field exercises, including the participation of relevant international organizations. One State Party presented on its national CBRN Centre and strategy as well as the underlying principles for responding to a CBRN attack. Furthermore, the importance of a consistent and flexible communication strategy in an incident was highlighted. In this connection, some States Parties noted that communication strategies could be made more effective by incorporating gender perspectives.

20. In the course of the discussions, some States Parties also stressed the importance of well-equipped national laboratories and one State Party presented its approach on how to handle samples of unknown origin. Additionally, information concerning efforts to strengthen the roster of designated laboratories under the UN Secretary-General's Mechanism, including the conduct of a larger capstone field exercise in 2020, was presented. It was also stressed that in order to mitigate the consequences of the use of biological and toxin weapons, it was crucial to develop and strengthen national capacities of States Parties. Some delegations reported on regional capacity building initiatives, including on biosafety, biosecurity, risk-assessment, disease diagnostics and outbreak management.

21. International organizations also took the floor on this agenda item. A technical presentation was delivered by the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology with focus on the Centre's analytical assets, which can support exposed countries in managing an epidemic threat, as well as on capacity building efforts in countries at risk. INTERPOL informed delegations about an operational workshop organized in Uganda in 2018 in relation to response to the Ebola outbreak in the Eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which allowed for an assessment of how INTERPOL and law enforcement more widely, can contribute to response efforts. The European Union referred to its continued support to the Convention and mentioned the adoption of a new EU

Council Decision in January 2019 in this regard, which includes a project specifically aimed at supporting States Parties' preparedness to respond to attacks involving biological agents.

VI. Agenda item 9 - 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

22. Under this agenda item, two working papers were introduced. One document described the national experience of a State Party in relation to an integrated approach to preparedness, detection, and response to agricultural threats, whereas the other paper informed about existing support mechanisms by relevant international organizations and capacity building initiatives to address the possible hostile use of biological agents against livestock. In the ensuing discussions, various delegations stressed the need to strengthen attention beyond solely human health aspects and address also threats to agriculture, plants, livestock and the environment. It was noted that attacks on those sectors can have enormous impact on national economies, the environment and livelihoods.

23. Various States Parties presented national efforts undertaken in these fields. The need for close cooperation among different agencies and sectors to ensure an integrated response was stressed. Furthermore, the suggestion was made to focus future discussions on sharing best practices among States Parties, and on practical steps to facilitate coordination and cooperation in order to prepare for and respond to naturally occurring and intentional threats to agriculture, livestock, or the environment. Information was also shared about regional cooperation opportunities in the area of diagnosis and treatment of animal pathologies and zoonoses.

24. Some States Parties made the suggestion to foster a permanent dialogue between the BWC, FAO, OIE and INTERPOL as well as other relevant actors on these topics. Noting that the United Nations General Assembly declared 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health, some States Parties proposed to devote particular focus to plant health issues in next year's Meeting of Experts.

25. A technical presentation was delivered by the Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), spelling out the tools that States Parties have under that treaty for dealing with plant pests. Several delegations expressed their appreciation and invited further discussion on this area. The OIE also took the floor to describe the Organization's mandate in the context of animal and zoonotic diseases, as well as developments and activities in the context of the implementation of the Organization's bio-threat reduction strategy, which addresses issues of relevance for Article VII. Both the OIE and INTERPOL also to a current joint project involving also the FAO, which aims to build resilience against agro-terrorism and agro-crime.

Annex II

List of documents of the Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness

<i>Symbol.</i>	<i>Title</i>
BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/1	Provisional agenda for the 2019 Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness
BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/2	Report of the 2019 Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness
BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/CRP.1 English only	Draft report of the 2019 Meeting of Experts on assistance, response and preparedness
BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/INF.1 English/French/Spanish only	List of participants
BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/WP.1 English only	An integrated approach to preparedness, detection, and response to agricultural threats - The experience of the United States
BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/WP.2 English only	Update on Australia's Health Security Initiative for the Indo-Pacific region: Strengthening regional response capabilities for infectious disease outbreaks – Submitted by Australia
BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/WP.3 English only	Approach to Strengthening Measures for Emerging Infectious Diseases based on Lessons Learned from the Ebola Outbreak - Submitted by Japan
BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/WP.4 English only	Strengthening National, Sub-Regional and International Capacities to Prepare for and Respond to the Deliberate Use of Biological Weapons: Project update - Submitted by Japan
BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/WP.5 English only	Possible hostile use of biological agents and toxins against livestock: Existing support mechanisms by relevant international organizations and capacity building efforts by Canada through the G7-Led Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction - Submitted by Canada
BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/WP.6 English only	Core Elements for an Effective Article VII Response: the need for an international coordinating body - Submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
BWC/MSP/2019/MX.4/WP.7 English only	Assistance, response and preparedness - Submitted by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and other States Parties to the BWC