

**Seventh 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**

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**Follow-up to the recommendations and decisions
of the Sixth Review Conference and the question of
future review of the Convention**

**Strengthening the existing Confidence-Building Measure
submission and review process**

Submitted by Canada

I. Introduction

1. Canada attaches great value to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention's Confidence-Building Measures (CBM), and recognises the requirement for each State Party to submit their CBMs annually. We believe that exchanging information contributes to enhancing transparency and building confidence between States Parties, as well as improving States Parties' implementation of Article X. We are committed to identifying new ways to improve the CBMs.

2. Recognizing the importance of the work done by other States Parties on strengthening the CBMs — most notably that done by Switzerland, Norway, Germany, and the Geneva Forum, the work done through the European Union's Joint Action on CBMs, and the efforts of other States Parties who have submitted working papers and proposals to the Review Conference — Canada submits the following five proposals to improve the CBM process. These proposals would have an impact on the manner in which CBMs are prepared and utilised.

II. Language

3. CBM submissions would build more confidence if they could be read and understood by all States Parties. At present, CBMs are only available in the language in which they were originally submitted. This approach restricts the exchange of information (due to language barriers), which in turn undercuts the confidence building objective of the submissions. In this context, Canada sees value in translating CBMs from their original language into additional UN languages. Translations could be performed through the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) using voluntary contributions by States Parties. To help demonstrate the value of this proposal, Canada translated its own 2011 English CBM into French, and has pledged to make a voluntary contribution to the ISU to help support the

translation of 2010 and 2011 submissions. We encourage other States Parties to provide voluntary contributions to the ISU for further translation efforts. The ISU will post the translations on the restricted website for access by all States Parties.

III. Nothing new to declare

4. In the current CBM format, States Parties have the option of stating that, for certain forms, they have “Nothing New to Declare”. However, the current manner in which CBMs are submitted by States Parties and placed online by the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) makes it very difficult to determine when the initial declaration was made, and therefore to locate the pertinent information. Moreover, CBMs pre-dating 2007 are not posted on the secure ISU website, and are therefore much more difficult to retrieve. To address this issue, Canada proposes that one of the following two options be endorsed at the Seventh Review Conference:

(a) States Parties should agree to remove Nothing New to Declare as an option from Form 0. If information has not changed from the previous year (or the last year when changes were included), it should be repeated *verbatim* in the current year’s declaration. A short preface that nothing had been changed since the initial declaration could also be added. This would also allow States Parties a further opportunity to review their previous submission(s) to confirm that indeed nothing had changed in the previous twelve months. This would help States Parties to receive a complete and up-to-date picture of a country’s BTWC-related activities by examining a single submission. This approach would place no additional burden on the submitting state, as the previously-provided information would simply need to be copied.

(b) As an alternative, States Parties could agree to task the ISU to conduct a feasibility study for consideration by the Meeting of States Parties regarding the creation of a wholly-electronic submission process, which would allow for unchanged information to be automatically moved forward each year. Such submission software, operated by the ISU, could be created and used by all States Parties for their annual CBM submissions. This software could include a Nothing New to Declare option, which, if used, would automatically provide the most up-to-date information, citing the year of that declaration. This software could facilitate electronic CBM submission, and also facilitate translation of CBMs into other official UN languages.

IV. Transparency

5. CBM submissions only build confidence if they can be read and analyzed by all. Transparency in CBM submissions is important, and the restriction of such information does nothing to increase confidence between States Parties. As a result, Canada made its 2011 CBM submission publicly available, and pledges that future submissions will also be accessible to all. Canada urges all States Parties make similar pledges, so that CBMs in part or in whole can be accessible to all.

V. Clarification

6. At present, there is no established procedure for asking questions or seeking clarification about a State Party’s CBM submission, other than through bilateral channels as per Article V. As submissions cannot build confidence if information is misunderstood or unclear, Canada proposes that States that have questions or comments about another country’s submission have the option to submit requests for clarification to the BTWC’s

Implementation Support Unit (ISU), which would in turn engage with the relevant country to provide a response. This process would encourage a constructive and productive exchange on CBM submissions and provide a simple and accessible mechanism for all States Parties. This approach would also support Article X implementation, as it would provide an additional avenue for countries that provide assistance to explore opportunities for bilateral cooperation on disease surveillance (Form B), research (Form C), coordination of BTWC-related events (Form D), and/or legislative implementation of the BTWC (Form E).

VI. CBM completion support

7. CBM Forms can be challenging for a State Party to complete, especially for its initial declaration. While a certain degree of support is presently available (including from Canada and the European Union), additional support is desired. Therefore, Canada proposes that CBM Completion Workshops be organized to support States Parties that require assistance to complete their annual CBM submissions. Such workshops could be held in Geneva on the margins of the BTWC intersessional meetings and/or in various regions around the world. Canada is prepared to consider providing financial support to the ISU for such workshops.

8. Canada attaches significant value to CBMs, and hopes that these proposals might be adopted at the Review Conference. We believe that the proposed amendments would improve transparency, further build confidence, and assist in the full implementation of Article X.
