
**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**

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**Consideration of the provision of assistance and
coordination with relevant organizations upon
request by any State Party in the case of alleged
use of biological or toxin weapons, including
improving national capabilities for disease surveillance,
detection and diagnosis and public health systems**

**Synthesis of considerations, lessons, perspectives,
recommendations, conclusions and proposals drawn from the
presentations, statements, working papers and interventions
on the topic under discussion at the Meeting of Experts**

Submitted by the Chairman

I. Aims and challenges

1. Recognizing that the provision of assistance and coordination with relevant organizations in the case of alleged use of biological or toxin weapons is an issue that has both health and security components at both the national and international levels, and should therefore be pursued by States Parties and other relevant actors as a joint venture to ensure global safety and security, States Parties should work to ensure that:

- (a) Efforts undertaken are effective irrespective of whether a disease outbreak is naturally occurring or deliberately caused;
- (b) Diseases and toxins that could harm humans, animals, plants or the environment are all covered;
- (c) The provision of assistance and coordination with relevant organizations involves all relevant stakeholders at local, national, regional and international levels;
- (d) Capabilities are in place before they are needed to detect, quickly and effectively respond to, and recover from the alleged use of a biological or toxin weapon;
- (e) Effective and sustainable partnerships are built between developed and developing countries, between developed and developed countries, and between developing and developing countries.

2. Recognizing that developing effective measures for the provision of assistance and coordination with relevant organizations to respond to the use of a biological or toxin weapon is a complex task, States Parties should consider how best to respond to the following challenges:

- (a) The lack of clear procedures for submitting requests for assistance or for responding to a case of alleged use of biological or toxin weapons;
- (b) The political aspects of situations in which there may be use or alleged use of biological or toxin weapons;
- (c) Lack of resources in the human and animal health fields, and most acutely in the area of plant health, particularly in developing countries;
- (d) The significant differences between responding to a natural outbreak of disease and an outbreak resulting from hostile use of a biological agent or toxin;
- (e) The time lag between recognising an outbreak of disease and establishing whether or not the outbreak was intentional;
- (f) The potentially complex and sensitive interface between an international public health response and international security issues;
- (g) An employer's duty of care when deploying staff to a potentially contaminated environment.

II. Building national capacity

3. Recognising that there are differences among States Parties in terms of their level of development, national capabilities and resources, that these differences affect national and international capacity to respond to an alleged use of a biological or toxin weapon, and that national preparedness contributes to international capabilities and cooperation, States Parties, in a position to do so should assist other States Parties, including by:

- (a) Enhancing relevant capabilities, including through transfers of know-how and voluntary intellectual property rights;
- (b) Strengthening human resources through frequent seminars, international workshops and courses, as well as training, simulations, sharing of experiences and best practices;
- (c) Identifying opportunities for collaborative research, such as on detection equipment or in fundamental and translational research, as well as opportunities for the transfer of relevant technologies;
- (d) Sharing advances in science and technology, such as portable detectors; personal protective equipment; new vaccines; more effective drugs; and modern decontamination equipment.
- (e) Identifying and resolving legal, regulatory, and other barriers to effective multilateral cooperation, such as: inconsistent standards for forensic identification of agents; vaccine liability; and licensing for emergency use of medical countermeasures;
- (f) Providing assistance immediately to any State Party, upon request, that has been exposed to a danger as a result of the use, or alleged use, of any biological or toxin weapon.

4. Recognizing that, given their commitments under the Convention, States Parties bear the primary responsibility for providing assistance and coordinating with relevant

organizations in the case of alleged use of biological or toxin weapons, and that national preparedness contributes to international capabilities and cooperation, States Parties should work to build their national capacities according to their specific needs and circumstances, including by:

- (a) Developing and maintaining national action and contingency plans for dealing with the use of biological or toxin weapons, possibly making use of an all hazards approach,
- (b) Developing procedures and practices to assess national needs in the case of an alleged use of a biological or toxin weapons, and to communicate these needs quickly, clearly and effectively to the international community;
- (c) Strengthening, maintaining and regularly reviewing relevant health and security structures, capacities, human resources and standard operating procedures, including in the areas of first aid, triage, evacuation and treatment; vaccines; decontamination capacity; personnel screening; securing water and food supplies; personal protective equipment; collecting, transporting, and testing samples; and operating in contaminated locations;
- (d) Assuming responsibility for the safety and security of all biological materials and facilities in their territory or under their control.

5. Recognizing the importance of disease detection and surveillance efforts and rapid and accurate diagnostic services for detecting, identifying and confirming the cause of outbreaks, States Parties should work to ensure that their own capacities and those of other States Parties include:

- (a) Capability to identify novel, emerging, re-emerging or exotic diseases, as well as well-known infectious diseases;
- (b) Use of rapid chemical and biological detection techniques (both static and mobile);
- (c) Modern tools for sampling, epidemiological intelligence and investigation;
- (d) Regular reviews of techniques, tools and equipment;
- (e) Support from regional collaborative networking as well as collaborations with industry and international partners.
- (f) The presence of adequate expertise, including in basic cell and molecular biology, and rapid access to advanced and specialist diagnostic laboratories that can quickly test for rare or dangerous pathogens;
- (g) High-quality diagnostics, appropriate diagnostic equipment, detailed standard operating procedures and flexible protocols;
- (h) A decentralised, resilient primary diagnostic capability, allowing for short transport distances for samples and rapid analysis;
- (i) Sharing of data and information among diagnostic laboratories;
- (j) External quality assessment of relevant facilities, including certification against international standards;
- (k) A forensic capability to provide evidence in the event of a prosecution involving the alleged use of a biological or toxin weapon.

III. Preparing effective responses

6. Recognising that the need to investigate and mitigate the potential impact of an event and to bring any perpetrators to justice, States Parties should consider:

(a) Adopting best practices in emergency management, addressing the full range of possible implications, including: primary fatalities and injuries; secondary hazards or events; property damage; service disruption; socio-economic impact; and long-term health issues;

(b) Establishing clear channels of communication and information flow, taking advantage, where possible, of existing arrangements;

(c) Accessing expert advice, for both first responders and decision makers, provided in a timely and easily understandable manner and preferably from a single agreed source;

(d) Training and exercises, both table-top and field, to validate plans and systems thoroughly, train frontline responders, and highlight vulnerabilities;

(e) Adopting a strategy for information management, including deciding what information will reach the media and ensuring that only exact and precise information is used, in order to prevent panic or irresponsible use of information.

7. Recognising the importance of effective coordination of a response, and of fostering mutual respect and understanding, States Parties should promote regular communication between, and joint exercises involving, all relevant stakeholders at local, national, regional and international levels, including:

(a) government agencies;

(b) international organizations;

(c) academic institutions;

(d) all operators handling high-risk materials and working in high-risk facilities;

(e) security personnel, such as the police, defence forces, fire department, and coast guard;

(f) the private sector, including the pharmaceutical, food, and transportation industries.

8. Recognising the particular importance of ensuring a coordinated response from the law enforcement and health sectors, States Parties should work to improve effective cooperation between these sectors, including by:

(a) Fostering mutual awareness, understanding, and improved information exchange across the separate investigations;

(b) Supporting a joint approach to training, contact, first response, recognition, investigation, action and communication;

(c) Developing and implementing protocols for working together in such activities as: exchanging information; conducting risk and threat assessments; and carrying out interviews;

(d) Using formal agreements to reinforce informal personal contacts and formalise concepts and principles for conducting joint investigations;

(e) Establishing, in advance, boundaries between laboratory support for diagnostic purposes and for forensic work.

IV. International partners and mechanisms

9. Recognising the role played by the Convention in the provision of assistance and coordination with relevant organizations, States Parties noted that the Convention is an appropriate and capable body for:

- (a) Bilateral, regional or multilateral consultations prior to an allegation of use being lodged with the Security Council, and for recommending to the Security Council the best way to act in response to an allegation;
- (b) Developing clearer and more detailed procedures for submitting requests for assistance, and for promptly providing assistance following an allegation of use;
- (c) Developing a comprehensive range of information on sources of assistance, and/or a mechanism to request assistance.

10. Recognising the role of international organizations, such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Organization for Animal Health, and the International Criminal Police Organization, States Parties should encourage these organizations to work together more closely, within their respective mandates, to address the threats posed by the use of biological and toxin weapons, including by:

- (a) Assessing the strengths and weaknesses of, and improving, international, regional and national laboratory networks;
- (b) Developing relevant standards, standard operating procedures and best practices;
- (c) Communicating real-time risk assessments and recommendations to States Parties;
- (d) Intensifying their efforts to help States Parties to enhance relevant capacity;
- (e) Coordinating and complementing relevant response assistance, upon request, to States Parties;
- (f) Improving information-sharing within and among organizations, and harmonizing procedures, regulations and the use of resources and equipment;
- (g) Coordinating cooperation, especially with developing countries, on research and development of vaccines and diagnostic reagents, and between International Reference Laboratories and research institutions.

11. Recognising that the United Nations Secretary-General's investigative mechanism is an impartial and effective tool for investigating the alleged use of biological and toxin weapons that complements the provisions of the Convention, States Parties should encourage the Secretary-General to maintain and improve the mechanism, including by:

- (a) Updating and improving it to take into account developments in biological science and technology;
- (b) Building upon the highest level of expertise, both from experts and laboratories, provided by Member States of the United Nations;
- (c) Benefitting from closer technical collaboration with international partners for reviewing manuals, training and procedures as well as the provision of relevant support to an investigation by seconding experts, sharing necessary equipment, field experience, and lessons learned;
- (d) Receiving sustainable funding from Member States of the United Nations;

- (e) Publishing the updated appendices.

12. Recognizing that the role played by the International Health Regulations (2005) in building capacity to prevent, protect against, control and respond to the international spread of disease is consistent with objectives of the Convention, and that despite their different scopes and purposes, the effective implementation of both regimes can be mutually reinforcing, States Parties should consider the utility of the International Health Regulations as a means of building capacity for:

- (a) The early detection of disease events;
 - (b) The provision of appropriate reactions based on well-founded risk assessments;
 - (c) International cooperation and assistance;
 - (d) Timely, accurate information exchange;
 - (e) Technology exchanges in the field of disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis and containment.
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