

**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**

30 July 2015

English only

2015 Meeting

Geneva, 14-18 December 2015

Meeting of Experts

Geneva, 10-14 August 2015

Adoption of the programme of work

**Improving methods of work at the Biological Weapons
Convention meetings**

Submitted by Belarus and the Russian Federation

1. This paper's origins lay in observing and participating in the meetings in the format of the BWC including its intersessional process and Review Conferences. In the course of doing so it has become apparent that the methods of work utilised at such gatherings may be improved with a view to contributing to their enhanced transparency, inclusiveness and efficiency. Based on past experience, it is believed that the BWC's 2015 meetings and the Eighth Review Conference in 2016 may benefit from following certain well established principles, guidelines and procedures.
2. Greater use should be made of subsidiary bodies established to enhance efficiency of work at meetings. For situations requiring detailed consideration and examination of items, a Committee of the Whole may be established. In order to reduce the burden on the Chair/President, on the plenary and the Committee of the Whole, a Drafting Committee should also be set up and tasked with formulating drafts and giving advice on drafting. To assist with finding substantive and drafting solutions for a particular issue, Friends of the Chair may be appointed and delegates should be encouraged to volunteer for such positions.
3. If a delegation requests that its statement, presentation, etc be treated as an official document of a meeting, the Secretariat should process and issue it under official nomenclature. All documentation issued by the Secretariat under official nomenclature should also be uploaded on the BWC's website including, *inter alia*, Conference Room Papers. The reason for this is that paper copies may become lost and there should be a way for delegations to receive all official documents from a permanent electronic repository.
4. During sessions, textual proposals and official-series documents should normally be circulated by the Secretariat in all official languages of the BWC meetings. In some situations, if and when so required by genuine necessity, exceptions from this general rule might be made.



5. When a meeting proceeds to a report writing stage, it is important to ensure orderly, transparent and non-discriminatory conduct. All textual proposals and substantive amendments should clearly have an ownership of a delegation/delegations putting them forward and/or joining them as co-sponsors at a later stage. Unless consensus of all participants is ensured, proposals should be included in a draft in square brackets. The square-bracketed text is to be cleaned up through a proper process of diplomatic negotiation. Even a clean text section of a draft may be revisited at a later stage should other parts present problems following the principle of “nothing is decided until everything is decided”.
6. All textual proposals put forward by delegations should be included in a clean/bracketed form in the rolling text under discussion. Delegations making proposals for substantive elements of the report should make effort to introduce and explain them so that their interlocutors become better positioned to consider them on their merits. Such an approach will help in reducing the occurrence of situations whereby strange aberrations of unknown origin mysteriously creep up into the text while delegations are unaware of their meaning and circumstances.
7. To assist delegates in their work, the text of a draft under consideration should be presented on a large screen in the room where a meeting is held. A member of the Secretariat should be available to input changes to be reflected on the screen as the draft is developed by delegations. At the end of the working session, a printout of the latest draft should be distributed by the Secretariat. To facilitate delegations’ work with the rolling text, its iterations in editable format should also be uploaded on the restricted part of the BWC’s website accessible by all States Parties.
8. Unnecessary and lengthy adjournment/suspension of meetings should be avoided because in doing so precious time is usually wasted. Such wastage becomes especially apparent by the end of the session when, as it happened previously, half-prepared drafts are imposed upon delegations under the pretext that available time was used up and therefore the only thing that remains to be done is to adopt what is being peddled.
9. Negotiations must be conducted transparently and inclusively by applying the same standard to all participants. Informal bilateral/multilateral consultations may certainly take place in parallel but they must not substitute a meeting’s working process, interrupt or distract from normal proceedings.
10. No effort should be spared to negotiate in good faith a substantive outcome of a meeting and delegations may benefit from their disposition towards compromise. That being so, in certain situations, as it regrettably occurred in the past, arriving at a balanced and meaningful document may simply not be possible. Should that happen, a procedural report may be adopted; a Chair’s summary of a meeting may also be circulated for information purposes only. In a situation of that kind a Chair’s summary should be preferable over a potentially bent document that would not be conducive to promoting common understanding among States Parties and their agreed action in support of the BWC.