
**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**

5 August 2013

English only

2013 Meeting

Geneva, 9–13 December 2013

Meeting of Experts

Geneva, 12–16 August 2013

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

**Biennial item: how to enable fuller participation
in the Confidence-building Measures (CBMs)**

**Improving participation in the Confidence-Building Measure
system**

Submitted by Canada

I. Introduction

1. Canada attaches great value to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention's (BWC) Confidence-Building Measures (CBM), and recognises the requirement for each State Party to submit their CBMs annually and in a timely fashion. 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, including enabling fuller participation in CBMs, as mandated by the Seventh Review Conference.

2. Recognizing the importance of the work done by other States Parties on strengthening the CBMs, Canada submits the following proposals to improve participation rates in the CBM system. In Canada's view, the changes proposed herein could enable additional States Parties to complete CBMs, and also improve how the information found in CBM submissions is utilized.

II. Electronic submission

3. The preparation and submission of CBMs could be greatly facilitated and improved through the creation and utilization of an electronic platform. At the Seventh Review Conference, States Parties agreed "that the Implementation Support Unit shall, in cooperation with States Parties, continue to examine and develop options for electronic means of submission of CBMs." (BWC/CONF.VII/7, Part III, paragraph 25(c)). Canada supports the ongoing work by the European Union to develop an electronic submission platform that would allow States Parties to create, edit, revise, submit, print, access,

consult, and search within CBMs, and allow public access to CBMs marked public by the submitting State Party. Furthermore, while noting the significant differences between CBMs and declarations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Canada sees value in the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) investigating the possibility of modeling an electronic CBM platform after the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Electronic Declarations for National Authorities (EDNA) system.

III. Language

4. CBM submissions would be more useful, build more confidence, and encourage greater participation 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, decreasing their utility and thus States Parties' interest in participation. In this context, Canada sees value in translating CBMs from their original language into additional languages of the United Nations. Translations could be performed through the ISU using voluntary contributions by States Parties, or by States Parties themselves on a voluntary basis. To help demonstrate the value of this proposal, Canada has been providing its own CBM in English and French and will continue to do so. Furthermore, Canada's Global Partnership Program funded the translation of 16 CBMs from 2010 and 2011 from their language of submission (Spanish, Russian, Arabic, or Chinese) into English, and shared these submissions with the BTWC at the 2012 Meeting of States Parties. These CBMs can be found on the restricted ISU website. Canada would consider translating additional CBMs into English and/or French if requested to do so. Note that translation would be greatly facilitated if CBM submissions were prepared using a standardized electronic platform.

IV. CBM completion cooperation and assistance

5. 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 (2004) and the European Union (2009), additional support, which would contribute to Article X implementation, is warranted. Therefore, Canada proposes several options for cooperation and assistance in CBM completion. Firstly, CBM completion workshops could be organized to support States Parties that require assistance to complete their annual CBM submissions. Such workshops would preferably be held in Geneva on the margins of the BTWC intersessional meetings, but could also be hosted in various regions around the world on a voluntary basis. Another approach is to encourage bilateral cooperation on CBMs and the provision of assistance remotely, using the national point of contact list found on the restricted ISU website. Questions and answers, as well as experiences and best practices can easily be shared by phone, e-mail, or at the very least bilateral embassies. Canada therefore requests that all States Parties update their national point of contact on the ISU website and actively seek out CBM collaboration targets. The cooperation/assistance database can be used for this purpose as well; Canada has just offered to provide virtual assistance on CBM completion via the database (Offer_2013-023). Additionally, Canada suggests States Parties to share experiences, needs, questions, best practices, or any other information that could be useful for CBM cooperation/assistance at the 2013 Meeting of Experts, 2013 Meeting of States Parties, and the Eighth Review Conference, through working papers and interventions during the relevant agenda items. Lastly, recognizing that electronic and paper guidebooks are useful for States Parties completing their initial CBM submission, Canada is working on updating its 2004 CBM guide, and intends to share it at the 2013 Meeting of States Parties.

V. Clarification mechanism

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 per Article V. As submissions cannot build confidence if information is misunderstood or unclear, Canada proposes that States Parties use the standing agenda item on "strengthening national implementation" to request clarifications to CBM submissions in a manner as non-confrontational as possible. Alternatively, States that have questions or comments about another country's submission should have the option to submit requests for clarification to the ISU, which would in turn engage with the relevant country to provide a response. If necessary, these questions could be provided anonymously. 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), and/or legislative implementation of the BTWC (Form E).

VI. Conclusion

7. Canada attaches significant value to CBMs, and hopes that these proposals might be considered intersessionally. We believe that the proposed amendments would improve transparency, further build confidence, enable fuller CBM participation, and assist in the full implementation of Article X.
