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**Meeting of Experts
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Item 5 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of, with a view to enhancing international
cooperation, assistance and exchange in biological
sciences and technology for peaceful purposes, promoting
capacity building in the fields of disease surveillance,
detection, diagnosis, and containment of infectious diseases**

DISEASE OUTBREAK REPORTING: UK APPROACH TO COMPLETION OF CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURE FORM B

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I. Background

1. The Sixth Review Conference in 2006 reaffirmed the importance of exchange of information through Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and its contribution to enhancing transparency and building confidence. Several measures to update the mechanism of transmission of information were agreed, and the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) has subsequently developed an electronic mechanism for submission and distribution.
2. CBM "B" requires States Parties to exchange information on outbreaks of infectious diseases and similar occurrences caused by toxins. Background information on outbreaks of reportable infectious diseases should be submitted under Form B (i), using existing national reporting systems for human, animal and plant diseases. Information on outbreaks of infectious diseases and similar occurrences that seem to deviate from the normal pattern should be submitted under Form B (ii), which requires more detailed information on the nature and outcome of the event. Provision of such information by States Parties depends on robust disease surveillance and notification capabilities, which is relevant to this year's Intersessional Programme topic on promoting capacity building in the fields of disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis, and containment of infectious diseases.
3. Since the CBM process began in 1987, advances in information technology have greatly increased the accessibility of relevant information by electronic means, particularly via the internet. Information on disease outbreaks is often available on national government websites

and on those of international governmental organisations, including WHO, OIE and FAO, to which member states are required to notify disease outbreaks. Such availability is likely to continue to increase, for example, following full implementation of the WHO's revised International Health Regulations (2005). Given this increased availability of information, we adopted new approaches in the latest UK CBM submission to facilitate the collection and presentation of disease outbreak information for CBM B. We note that some other States Parties have also taken similar approaches.

II. CBM Form B (i)

4. Collection of information for the CBM submission on infectious disease outbreaks in humans in the UK is complex, since the responsibility is not centralised. Statutory notifications of infectious diseases in England and Wales are made via local authorities to the Health Protection Agency¹, but for the rest of the UK the authority lies within the devolved administrations under Health Protection Scotland² and the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre Northern Ireland.³ In presentation of information for Form B (i), separate tables are provided for each administration, and hyperlinks to the individual websites of the relevant authority in each country are included to provide access to full information. However, for animal and plant disease outbreaks information is held centrally, thus the picture for the whole of the UK can be presented in one table. For animal disease outbreaks, hyperlinks to the appropriate Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) websites are also included.⁴ Information on notifications to the OIE is highly accessible on its website, so a link to that information is also provided.⁵ We hope to be able to extend this approach to our information on plant disease outbreaks in future, as capability becomes available.

III. CBM Form B (ii)

5. There are specific issues to consider in submitting information on disease outbreaks 'that seem to deviate from the normal pattern' under Form B (ii), particularly for the agricultural sector where there may be adverse trade implications associated with animal and plant disease outbreaks. Animal disease outbreaks should be reported through the OIE system, which has a format that provides the information needed to judge what trade measures are appropriate. However, since such information is not required in the CBM B (ii) submissions format, there are legitimate concerns that such reports, when not linked to relevant trade information, could lead to unnecessary trade restrictions being put in place. Thus for future submissions of information on animal disease outbreaks under Form B (ii), the UK will provide this via a direct link to the relevant pages on the OIE WAHID (World Animal Health Information Database) website showing UK notifications and subsequent information on the outbreak. In this way the full spectrum of information will be presented, including trade aspects, thus avoiding inconsistencies in information in different regimes and reducing the potential for unnecessarily hampering trade.

¹ For reporting procedures see:

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&Page&HPAwebAutoListName/Page/1191942172952?p=1191942172952>

² <http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/surveillance/NotifiableInfectiousDiseaseData.aspx>

³ <http://www.cdscni.org.uk/surveillance/default.asp>

⁴ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/notifiable/ndi2008.htm>

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/notifiable/index.htm>

⁵ http://www.oie.int/wahis/public.php?page=country_reporting&this_country_code=GBR&detail

6. For example, in reporting a case similar to the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak included in our CBM return for 2007⁶, we would provide a brief account of the outbreak and why it was considered to deviate from the normal pattern. This would be accompanied by hyperlinks to the appropriate OIE WAHID web pages, giving information on the UK's reporting of an exceptional epidemiological event, and follow-up reports on the investigation and control of the outbreak.⁷ We would also provide access to official national reports on the outbreak, via the Defra website.⁸

IV. Conclusion

7. The ready availability of information on official websites, particularly on animal health, along with the ISU's introduction of electronic submission and distribution of CBMs has made this approach feasible. It can also be applied to other CBM forms, such as Form E (Declaration of legislation, regulations and other measures) where the required material may be readily accessible on national or international websites. Other States Parties may wish to consider adopting similar approaches to facilitate their collection and submission of CBM information.

⁶ Available on the public area of the UNOG BWC website:

[http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/\(httpAssets\)/248767DD73C29B06C12574A60047CCBC/\\$file/BWC_CB_M_2008_UK\(2\).pdf](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/248767DD73C29B06C12574A60047CCBC/$file/BWC_CB_M_2008_UK(2).pdf)

⁷ http://www.oie.int/wahis/public.php?page=event_summary&reportid=5869

http://www.oie.int/wahis/public.php?page=single_report&pop=1&reportid=5869

⁸ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/fmd/2007/index.htm>