

**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**

6 December 2013

English only

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Item 10 of the provisional agenda

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

**Confidence-Building Measures: taking discussions on
enabling fuller participation forward to the Eighth Review
Conference**

Submitted by Switzerland

I. Introduction

1. Switzerland attaches great value to the BWC's Confidence-Building measures. They continue to be the only instrument for States Parties to the BWC that establishes some degree of transparency, provides information about the implementation of the Convention and that allows for demonstrating compliance to a certain extent. The broad objectives set forth for the CBMs when they were established in 1986 remain entirely valid. The challenge today is to ensure that the CBM process and the individual forms enable us to meet these objectives.

2. Switzerland is convinced that fuller participation in the CBM process is inextricably linked to the relevance of the information to be provided. In our view, fuller participation in the CBMs is a direct indicator of States Parties' attitude towards the importance of fulfilling the Convention's requirements. Only with qualitatively acceptable annual returns, transparency and confidence will increase.

II. Conclusions from two years of discussions

3. With the biennial item on how to enable fuller participation in the Confidence-Building Measures coming to an end at this year's Meeting of States Parties, it is of utmost importance to continue our dialogue on ways forward in order to come prepared to the upcoming Eighth Review Conference.

4. The questions raised by the United Kingdom in its working paper (BWC/MSP/2012/WP.1) triggered a first round of fruitful discussions at this year's Meeting of Experts. More ground work is however needed in order to ensure a more

systematic review as well as a fundamental consideration of the CBM mechanism at the Eighth Review Conference.

5. In order to enable fuller participation in the CBM process, we need to assess whether we are asking the right questions, also taking developments in science and technology into account, in order to keep the process relevant. Switzerland put forward some of its suggestions in its working paper to the 2013 Meeting of Experts (BWC/MSP/2013/MX/WP.13).

6. In addition, Switzerland believes that an easy to use electronic platform in order to, *inter alia*, compile, submit, retrieve and search CBM declarations will enable fuller participation in the CBMs. Switzerland also sees merit in providing translations of CBMs into additional languages in order to facilitate accessibility.

7. As outlined in our working paper to the 2013 Meeting of Experts, further deliberations are needed to make the CBMs politically more relevant by addressing issues of completeness, accuracy and consistency of submissions. Common understandings are to be elaborated on how to handle and process the information contained in the CBMs in a systematic way, and on how we intend to deal with any ambiguities, doubts and suspicions in light of Article V's aim towards increased transparency. One of the key compliance indicators is reporting the status of national implementation and legislation in particular, which is partly addressed by Form E of the CBMs. Therefore, it is vital to continue our CBM discussions within the margins of the Standing Agenda Item on Strengthening National Implementation in order to be prepared to advance the CBM process at the Eighth Review Conference in 2016.

8. Finally, Switzerland welcomes the ideas and efforts by civil society aiming at filling the gap between now and 2016 with appropriate fora in order to foster further common understanding of issues related to the CBMs.

III. Recommendations

9. States Parties should:

(a) Seek information from States Parties that do not submit CBM declarations on the specific reasons why they do not participate in the process;

(b) Consider revisions to the concept, content and operation of the CBM process to ensure that States Parties perceive the measures as being useful, relevant and effective in terms of international transparency and confidence;

(c) Continue CBM discussions in the context of the Standing Agenda Item on Strengthening National Implementation, especially with regard to gaining better information on the status of national implementation and national legislation in particular.
