Modalities for Assistance and Cooperation Requests/Offers under Article X of the Biological Weapons Convention

Introduction

To promote the full implementation of Article X, the Seventh Review Conference decided to establish a "database system to facilitate requests for and offers of exchange of assistance and cooperation among States Parties".

The Conference invited States Parties, individually or together with other states or international organizations, “to submit on a voluntary basis to the Implementation Support Unit any requirements, needs or offers for assistance, including in terms of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information regarding the use of biological and toxin agents for peaceful purposes.”

The Conference mandated the Implementation Support Unit to establish and administer a database where the requests and offers would be stored; to facilitate, on request, the exchange of information among States Parties relating to the database and any resulting cooperation and assistance activities; and to report to States Parties on the operation of the database detailing the offers made, requests sought and matches made during a calendar year.

As decided by the 2013 Meeting of States Parties, the offers of assistance are available on the public area of the BWC website, while the requests for assistance are available to States Parties in the restricted area of the website.

The Eighth Review Conference decided to continue the database. It also mandated that the ISU, with inputs to be provided by States Parties, “will seek to improve the database to ensure that it is more user-friendly and comprehensive, and ensure that specific, timely and concrete offers of and requests for cooperation be provided by States Parties in the database.” In response to a call by the ISU, several States Parties submitted inputs which have contributed to an improved Database.

This guide has the purpose to outline the modalities for the submission of offers and requests.

Modalities

Submission

- Requests and offers (including any updates) for assistance and cooperation can be made in the following manner:
  - electronic submission via the Article X Database by individual States Parties;
  - providing the ISU with information on an assistance and cooperation offer/request;
- Assistance and cooperation offer/request templates can be found on the BWC website. These templates follow the information contained in the Article X Database.
Authentication and Acknowledgement

- Upon receipt of a request or offer, the ISU authenticates the information and acknowledges its receipt.

Notification and Information Sharing

- Within a week, the ISU shares the information in the following manner:
  - Notifies requesting/offering States Parties (Permanent Missions and National Contact Points) via e-mail within one week after receipt by the ISU;
  - Updates the Article X Database (in case information is received via e-mail or formal communication);
  - Informs about an assistance offer in the ‘Latest News’ Section of the BWC website with the consent of the offering State Party;
- Furthermore, the ISU publishes a summary of the offer in the next BWC Newsletter with the consent of the requesting/offering State Party;
- Unless otherwise specified by the offering/requesting State Party, the notification covers the name of the respective State Party, provides clarification whether an offer or request has been made, and refers to details via a link to the Article X database;

Feedback on requests responded to by offering States Parties

- Notification to the ISU of a cooperation and/or assistance action resulting from the use of the Database shall be the prerogative of the States Parties.
- In case a request is responded to through an offer on the Database, the following options are available:
  - Update made in the Article X Database directly by the requesting and the offering State Party;
  - Information provided to the ISU by the offering/requesting State Party, who in turn will update the Database accordingly;
- Given the possibility that a State Party may respond to a request through an offer that has not been included in the Database, or reacts to an offer with a bilateral request not registered in the Database, it will also be possible to notify the ISU on the understanding that the Database achieved its objective as a tool for international cooperation. In this case, the ISU should discuss with the State Party that did not register its offer(s)/request(s) on the pertinence of extending them to the other States Parties through their formalization in the Database.

Reporting

- The ISU provides an update of the status of offers/requests in its Annual Report to States Parties.