

Wednesday 12th August 2015

The second day: cooperation and assistance

The 2015 Meeting of Experts (MX) of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) continued on Tuesday with the formal proceedings focused on the topic of ‘Cooperation and assistance, with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation and assistance under Article X’. The programme of work outlined a chance for interventions on the overall topic with subsequent time set aside for the seven specific sub-topics identified in the decision of the Seventh BWC Review Conference in 2011. In addition, specific time had been allocated immediately after the lunch break for presentations by international bodies and Guests of the Meeting (GoMs). In the event, most delegations included their comments on the sub-topics within their general statements and so there were few interventions in the sub-topic slots. For ease of analysis, this report will follow the themes, drawing on the relevant points irrespective when they were made.

The Chair of this year’s meetings, Ambassador Mazlan Muhammad of Malaysia, took the chair for the morning session with Vice-Chair Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast of the Netherlands taking the chair for the afternoon session. Attendance in the main meeting room was slightly reduced during parts of the day as the Conference on Disarmament was in session and some delegates had responsibilities for both meetings.

The morning started with an additional introductory statement by Libya. Once the working session formally started, general remarks on Article X issues were given by: Iran (for the non-aligned), Ukraine, Russia, China, Tunisia (for Germany and Tunisia), Ecuador, India, Georgia, USA, Australia, and Ghana. Under the various sub-topics, the floor was taken by the ISU, Malaysia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Iran (national capacity), Netherlands, Cuba, Kenya, Italy and India. [Where a delegation took the floor more than once, only the first time is noted in this list.] The international bodies and GoMs presenting after lunch were the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) & Inter-Academy Panel, the Biotechnology Industry Organization, and the Developing Countries Vaccine Manufacturers Network.

Overarching points

The statement for the non-aligned highlighted that Article X had long been a priority for the group. The call for ‘full, effective and non-discriminatory’ implementation of Article X was reiterated, which would require removal of any restrictive measures that are contrary to the letter or spirit of Article X and thus lead to equal treatment of all States Parties that wish to use the life sciences for peaceful purposes. References were made to past non-aligned proposals for an Article X action plan and an Article X implementation mechanism.

There were a number of points of overlap with Article VII, particularly informed by experiences countering or responding to disease outbreaks such as Ebola or MERS. Projects and activities highlighted both human and animal health issues as well as

increasing concerns relating to anti-microbial resistance. South-South cooperation was raised, with India highlighting provision of diagnostic kits.

Sub-topic themes

On *implementation reporting*, some delegations made references to their published reports on Article X implementation. Many individual projects were highlighted. The Article X database has 4 requests on it from 3 States Parties. There are 29 offers on the database with 5 countries (Canada, France, Germany, UK, USA) putting forward direct offers of assistance and the Australia Group collectively offering assistance with export controls. On *challenges and obstacles* it was suggested that, while export controls were required to stop a State Party assisting prohibited activities, 'politically motivated restrictions' on trade in goods for peaceful purposes formed an obstacle to implementation of Article X. The ISU introduced its background paper on challenges and obstacles (INF.3). India suggested there were sometimes difficulties in obtaining certain high-technology equipment such as that for high containment laboratories. On *targeting and mobilizing resources*, presentations by GoMs highlighted the role industry could play in providing therapeutic products. The need to have effective regulation on medical products that was sufficiently flexible to respond to emerging disease situations was raised, although concerns were voiced that this might be better dealt with in other forums. On *education and training*, the OIE spoke of its 'Global Conference on Biological Threat Reduction' held this year. On *capacity-building*, Tunisia spoke about the German-Tunisian Partnership Programme for Excellence in Biological Security that was launched this year. Georgia referred to assistance for its Lugar Center. Kenya spoke of its biosecurity work with Denmark. A number of other projects were described. On *coordination with other relevant bodies* examples were given of a range of activities carried out with or through the World Health Organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Association of South East Asian Nations illustrating the range of bodies that can be involved in such projects.

Side events

There were four side events on Tuesday. A breakfast meeting was convened by the Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO) entitled 'Platform technologies & opportunities for combatting infectious disease: a discussion with companies'. Presentations were given by Phyllis Arthur (BIO), and Russell Wilson (Novavax). The event was chaired by Piers Millett (Biosecure).

Two lunchtime events were held in parallel. One, on 'Safeguarding science in the 21st century: BioSecurity Textbook', was convened by the Netherlands and the UK. Presentations were given by Tatyana Novosiolova (Bradford University), Koos van der Bruggen (Netherlands), Jo Husbands (US National Academy of Sciences), and Morten Madsen (Centre for Biosecurity, Denmark). The event was chaired by Ambassador Matthew Rowland (UK) with opening remarks given by Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast (Netherlands). The other, convened by the Global Health Security Agenda, was on 'Health Security through action'. Comments from Ambassador Robert Wood (USA) were followed by presentations by Simon Nikkari (Finland), Melissa Dahlke (Uganda), Mia Kjems Draegert (Denmark), Hellen Mbugua-Kabiru (Kenya), Anna Katz (Finland), and Furaha Mramba (Tanzania).

At the end of the day, an event was convened by Russia on 'Strengthening the BWC and improving its implementation: resuming negotiations in that regard in 2017'. A presentation was given by Vladimir Ladanov (Russia) with opening remarks given by Vladimir Yermakov (Russia).

This is the third report from the Meeting of Experts for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention which is being held from 10 to 14 August 2015 in Geneva.

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