

Friday 14th August 2015

## The fourth day: national implementation

The 2015 Meeting of Experts (MX) of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) continued on Thursday on the topic of ‘Strengthening national implementation’. As has been the practice this year, time was allocated to the overall topic with additional time set aside for specific sub-topics with specific time allocated immediately after the lunch break for presentations by international bodies and Guests of the Meeting (GoMs). As before, where copies of statements or presentations are provided by those that gave them, these will be added to the ISU website. New working papers and the first draft of the first part of the annex of the Report of the Meeting that contains ideas and suggestions raised during the first three days’ proceedings was circulated.

Interventions from states parties were given in the following order: Iran (for the non-aligned), UK, Spain, Mongolia, Burundi, Canada, Australia, Japan, Cameroon, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, China, Switzerland, India, Ecuador, Cuba, USA, France, Iraq, the Netherlands and Colombia. [Where a delegation took the floor more than once, only the first time is noted.] The international bodies and GoMs presenting after lunch were the UN 1540 Committee, UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the Bradford Disarmament Research Centre and VERTIC. The intervention by Cameroon is the first time it has taken the floor since the 2008 MX when it described the processes it was taking to join the Convention, becoming a state party in 2013.

### **Overarching points**

Improved national implementation of the obligations contained within the Convention has regarded as an important way of enhancing effectiveness of the overall regime to control biological weapons. With such a variety of national constitutional systems and varying levels of activities that need to be controlled, effective implementation in ways that are appropriate to national contexts has long been regarded as a significant challenge.

There was considerable overlap with other topics discussed within this MX – in particular with biosecurity issues that were raised under the science and technology topic on Wednesday and the need for capacity building within some states that was discussed under the cooperation and assistance topic on Tuesday. As with topics discussed earlier, some delegations were thinking ahead towards the Eighth BWC Review Conference.

Many delegations described developments for implementation of the BWC by their governments – proposals/consultations for what might be within the control measures, drafting of laws and regulations, approval by legislative assemblies and ongoing implementation of the controls. Many examples were given for implementation assistance from international bodies, other states parties and civil society.

While the sharing of good practice was widely supported, there were differing views of how this might best be done and the relevance to the Convention of informal arrangements to evaluate or assess compliance within individual states. The most prominent

proposal currently for such an informal arrangement is the French proposal for peer review. India indicated that while it was open to more discussion on the subject, it was yet to be convinced of the role of peer review within the BWC. The UK noted that there were a multiplicity of possible ways to move forward with the peer review concept.

### **Particular points**

Four new papers were circulated in the room as official documents on Thursday. WP16, prepared by Australia and Malaysia with 9 co-sponsors, was on ‘providing reassurance’ in BWC implementation through increased transparency and practical demonstrations of commitment to the Convention. WP.17 was a paper by Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Italy, Panama and Spain on measures to improve biosecurity. WP.18, prepared by the USA and co-sponsored by 36 others in the printed version in the room, repeated suggestions for elements of an effective national export control system that had been included in a paper (WP.2) presented to the 2014 Meeting of States Parties (MSP). The intention stated in the paper is to try to reach a common understanding on the points at the 2015 MSP as measures needed to implement Article III of the BWC. The co-sponsors on the printed version were primarily EU and JACKSNNZ countries with Colombia, Turkey and Ukraine. Other co-sponsors may be added. India expressed support for the paper in its intervention. WP.19 was a summary of national measures to address dual use research by Indonesia, Malaysia, Netherlands and USA following their side event on Wednesday.

The UK noted the importance of involving funders of research and highlighted the ‘Position statement on dual use research of concern and research misuse’ issued collectively by three of the country’s largest funders and updated in July.

Effective national implementation involves maintaining control of dangerous pathogens at all times and so the acknowledgement of inadvertent shipments of laboratory samples that contained live anthrax spores instead of inactivated spores from a US facility raised some questions. The Russian delegation suggested that this put lives at risk, not only of US citizens but citizens of other countries too as some shipments were to US laboratories in other countries. Russia posed a rhetorical question as to whether the succession of mishandling incidents were designed to habituate the public to such events and that it was worth posing the question as there might be some motive behind it. This was described as fanciful by the US.

### **Side events**

There were three events in the side rooms on Wednesday. A breakfast briefing was convened by the US delegation to report to states parties on the inadvertent shipments of dangerous pathogens from US laboratories. The event was described as being convened in order to enhance transparency but was held behind closed doors – the only activity at this MX, apart from the regional group caucus meetings, that was held in private.

Two lunchtime events were held in parallel. One, on ‘The Dutch Bottom-up Approach in Raising Biosecurity Awareness: How to Reach Professionals, Students and Amateurs?’, was convened by the Netherlands with presentations by Rik Bleijs, Saskia Rutjes, Cécile van de Vlucht and Harold van de Berg (all Netherlands) with opening remarks given by Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast. The other, convened by the Republic of Korea, Peru, Interpol and the World Health Organization, was entitled ‘Global Health Security Agenda - Action Package Meeting: Multisectoral Rapid Response on MERS Outbreak in Korea’. The presentation was given by Chaeshin Chu (Republic of Korea).

***NOTE: There will be an additional MX report covering the final day of the Meeting. This will be published next week and will be posted at the web location given below.***

*This is the fifth 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.*

*The reports are prepared by Richard Guthrie on behalf of the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP) and are available via the the BWPP website at <www.bwpp.org>. The author can be contacted during the Meeting of Experts on +41 76 507 1026 or <richard@cbw-events.org.uk>.*