

Information Note¹

- Event:** National Workshop on the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) for Cambodia
- Organizer:** Organized by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) Geneva Branch and its BWC Implementation Support Unit (BWC-ISU)
- Date and Venue:** 4-6 October 2023, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- Participants:** Representatives from institutions of Cambodia, UNODA, experts from Denmark, Thailand and The Netherlands, expert of the UN Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004)

Background

In a letter dated 28 August 2023 addressed to the Chair of the 1540 Committee, Mr. Hernán Pérez Loose, Chief of the BWC-ISU, Mr. Daniel Feakes, invited the 1540 Committee to participate in a National Workshop on the Biological Weapons Convention for Cambodia. The purpose of the event was to provide national authorities with an opportunity to: receive an overview of the BWC and its implementation requirements, including setting up inter-agency cooperation, national implementing legislation, Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) under the BWC, biosafety and biosecurity, preparedness and response for bio-emergencies; discuss and exchange views on national implementation issues and to identify BWC-related needs and priorities; exchange with external assistance providers on available international cooperation and assistance measures; explore interlinkages and synergies between BWC-related needs and priorities and the draft UNSCR 1540 (2004) National Action Plan. The workshop was carried out in the framework of the European Union Council Decision 2019/97 in support of the BWC, which is implemented by the UNODA Geneva Branch with the financial support of the European Union.

The Workshop was of relevance to resolution 1540 (2004) as follows:

Resolution 1540 (2004) recognizes that most States have undertaken binding legal obligations under treaties to which they are parties, or have made other commitments aimed at preventing the proliferation of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, and have taken effective measures to account for, secure and physically protect sensitive materials.

Operative paragraph 1 of resolution 1540 (2004) requires States to refrain from providing any form of support to non-State actors that attempt to develop, acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, transfer or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery. Under operative paragraph 2, States are obliged to adopt and enforce appropriate and effective laws prohibiting such activities by non-State actors on their territories. Operative paragraph 3 requires States to take and enforce effective measures to establish domestic controls to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons and their means of delivery, including by establishing appropriate controls over related materials. This includes measures to account for and secure such items in production, use, storage or transport; effective physical protection measures;

¹ For information – not an official report. The views expressed here do not necessarily represent those of the 1540 Committee or of the organizers or participants in the event.

effective border controls and law enforcement efforts; national export and trans-shipment controls over such items, including appropriate laws and regulations to control export, transit, trans-shipment and re-export and controls on providing funds and services related to such export and trans-shipment such as financing, and transporting that would contribute to proliferation, as well as end-user controls; and criminal or civil penalties for violations of such export control laws and regulations.

Resolution 1540 (2004) recognizes that some States may require assistance in implementing the provisions of this resolution within their territories and invites States in a position to do so to offer assistance as appropriate in response to specific requests to the States lacking the legal and regulatory infrastructure, implementation experience and/or resources for fulfilling the above provisions.

Operative paragraph 8 of resolution 2663 (2022) encourages States to prepare on a voluntary basis national implementation action plans, with the assistance of the 1540 Committee and its expertise as appropriate, mapping out their priorities and plans for implementing the key provisions of resolution 1540 (2004), and to submit these plans to the 1540 Committee.

Operative paragraph 12 of resolution 2663 (2022) reiterates the Security Council's decision that the 1540 Committee shall continue to intensify its efforts to promote the full implementation by all States of resolution 1540 (2004) ... noting the need for more attention on: enforcement measures; measures relating to biological, chemical and nuclear weapons; accounting for and securing related materials; and national export and transshipment controls.

Furthermore, operative paragraph 25 of resolution 2663 (2022) requests the 1540 Committee to continue to organize and participate in outreach events on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) at..., as appropriate, national level, including, as appropriate, inviting parliamentarians..., and promote the refinement of these outreach efforts to focus on specific thematic and regional issues related to implementation.

Highlights

National BWC workshop represented the first activity of its kind in Cambodia to raise awareness about the Convention and resolution 1540 (2004) BWC related obligations in particular. The State has made significant progress in implementing the Convention. Participants recognized the usefulness of the event for a better understanding of the BWC provisions, including the respective roles and responsibilities at the national level. International cooperation and assistance are considered essential to further strengthen the implementation of the BWC in Cambodia.

On the margins of the event, bilateral meetings were held with some participants that provided an opportunity to address outstanding questions and discuss tailor-made provision of assistance.

Participants showed interest in the topics discussed and were amenable to exploring further opportunities of engagement with BWC-ISU and other organizations in conjunction with implementing BWC and other legal instruments including resolution 1540 (2004) discussed during the event.

The 1540 Committee Expert briefed on the UN Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) with specific reference to biological weapons and measures to account for, secure and physically protect related materials, the status of implementation in Cambodia build upon the latest matrix data, and the 1540 Committee's assistance mechanism.

Additional Comments

For further information, please contact the 1540 Committee Experts by e-mail at 1540experts@un.org