

Information Note¹

- Event:** Stakeholder Workshop on National Implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in Eswatini
- Organizer:** United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs/Biological Weapon Convention - Implementation Support Unit (UNODA/BWC-ISU) in collaboration with the Government of Eswatini
- Date and Venue:** 13-14 November 2024, Mbabane, Eswatini
- Participants:** Representatives from institutions of Eswatini, including Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy, Ministry of Defence, Royal Eswatini Police Services, Eswatini Environmental Authority, Department of Water Affairs, Southern Africa Nazarene University, Ministry of Finance, University of Eswatini, Fire and Rescue Service, Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology, Ministry of Health
Donors: United Kingdom, United States of America, European Union (EU)
Regional Partners: Representative of the Government of Kenya
United Nations: BWC-ISU, United Nations Resident Coordinator Office in Eswatini and an expert of the UN Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004)

Background

In a letter dated 9 September 2024 addressed to the Chair of 1540 Committee, the Chief of BWC Implementation Support Unit (BWC-ISU), Mr. Daniel Feakes, invited the 1540 Committee to nominate an Expert of the 1540 Committee to participate in the Stakeholder Workshop on National Implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention that will be held from 13 to 14 November 2024 in Mbabane, Eswatini. The Expert was requested to deliver a presentation on resolution 1540 (2004)'s obligations and its complementarity with the BWC.

The main objectives of the workshop were:

- To enhance the knowledge of stakeholders on rights and obligations under the BWC
- To explore the roles of various national stakeholders in the implementation process
- To strengthen national cooperation, coordination and engagement on issues related to BWC implementation
- To raise awareness about the relationship between the BWC and other disarmament instruments; and
- To enhance the knowledge of participants on the obligation to prepare and submit confidence-building measures.

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

This 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 of resolution 1540 (2004), States are obliged to adopt and enforce appropriate and effective laws prohibiting such activities by non-State actors on their territories.
- Operative paragraph 3 of resolution 1540 (2004) 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; 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.
- Operative paragraph 3 of resolution 1540 (2004) ... calls upon States to present a first report no later than six months from the adoption of this resolution to the Committee on steps they have taken or intend to take to implement this resolution.
- 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

The workshop was opened by remarks by Mr. George Wachira, United Nations resident Coordinator in Eswatini. He first addressed the relevance of BWC, which has been highlighted as a result of the Covid pandemic and the health and economic impacts. He also raised the geopolitical challenges, including related to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction for which BWC represents a transparent key multilateral achievement that must be maintained. He developed few points of relevance with respect to BWC implementation such as preparedness

against bioweapon incidents for preventing damages, including in the context of a new pandemic and more generally in the maintenance of global health and safety around the world.

His Excellency Colin Wells, British High Commissioner to Eswatini, welcomed the close cooperation between Eswatini and UNODA, emphasizing on the biological risks and related impacts, as Covid pandemic has shown. He promoted global scientific development while risks of diversion of dual-use goods remains problematic. In that context, related confidence-building measures (CBM) under BWC and the Science and Technology Review mechanism on biological sciences constitute an essential instrument in supporting safe scientific cooperation.

Ms. Caitlin Piper, Chargé d'affaires at US Embassy Mbabane, emphasized the highest priority to minimizing biological threats that know no borders. She welcomed Eswatini's ratification of BWC in 1991 demonstrating State's engagement. She then promoted the importance of close interministerial cooperation at national level and between government and civil society (academia and industry). She also noted the importance of CBM among State parties, the submission of CBM reports and finally the need for updating continuously national Contact Points.

Ms. Eva-Maria Engdahi, Head of cooperation of Delegation of the European Union to the Kingdom of Eswatini, considered this workshop as vital in support of global disarmament, fostering Peace and Security. BWC also mitigates the risk posed by both accidental and deliberate incidents that could affect food supply for example. She noted the importance for Eswatini to submit a first CBM report and promoted EU assistance to Member States in all five continents through EU Centres of Excellence and EU P2P (Partner-to-Partner Programmes). She finally welcomed the participation of Kenya for sharing best practices as well as Committee 1540.

Finally, Ms. Gabsile Mabuza, Under-secretary of Ministry of Natural resources and Energy, delivered a statement on behalf of Ms. Lindiwe Mbingo, Principal-secretary. She thanked the organizer for this first national workshop on the BWC in Eswatini. Recalling State's ratification of BWC in 1991, she thanked donors for their support for this workshop, that is important for Eswatini to make the necessary steps forward in the implementation of resolution 1540.

The workshop brought together around 18 participants. The active engagement of all participants contributed to the success of this event, with its objective to support the full and effective implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) and BWC by Eswatini. BWC-ISU's practical exercises aiming at training participants on the submission of a first confidence-building measures report. This provided an opportunity to raise the overlaps of information with Eswatini's 1540 Committee matrix, approved in December 2020, and the connection with resolution 1540 (2004) requirement for submitting the 1540 Committee a first national report on national implementation of the resolution. The participation of representatives of Kenya was of great support in terms of sharing experience, lessons learnt and best practices.

Additional Comments

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