

Information Note¹

- Event:** Universalisation Workshop on the Biological Weapons Convention for the Pacific
- Organizer:** Organised by UNODA and hosted by the House of Representatives of New Zealand
- Date and Venue:** 21 September 2019, Wellington, New Zealand

Background

- On 15 August 2019, Amb Jacek Bylica (Special Envoy for Disarmament and Non-proliferation, European External Action Service), Rt Hon Trevor Mallard (Speaker, House of Representatives of New Zealand) and Mr Daniel Feakes (Chief, BWC Implementation Support Unit, UNODA) sent a letter to the Chair of the 1540 Committee inviting a representative of the 1540 Committee to participate in a universalisation workshop on the BWC for the Pacific, organised by UNODA and hosted by the House of Representatives of New Zealand. The Workshop took place in Wellington, New Zealand on 21 September 2019. It followed a regional parliamentary seminar on engaging parliaments in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), jointly organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the House of Representatives of New Zealand, which was held in Wellington during 18 to 20 September 2019.
- The aim of the BWC Universalisation Workshop was to bring together BWC States Parties and non-States Parties from the Pacific, as well as experts from the United Nations, regional organisations, intergovernmental organisations and civil society to discuss the BWC; its contribution to international peace and security, in general; and the prevention of the misuse of microbial organisms and the life sciences for hostile purposes, in particular; as well as national responsibilities and benefits from being a State Party. BWC experts and regional States Parties also shared their experiences with non-States Parties.
- Three Pacific Island States have yet to join the BWC: Kiribati, Micronesia (Federated States of) and Tuvalu.
- A 1540 Expert participated in the workshop.

Overview

The participants in this one-day workshop heard opening remarks from the official responsible for inter-parliamentary relations for the House of Representatives of New Zealand, the Deputy Head

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of the European Union Delegation in New Zealand, the Deputy Chief of the BWC Implementation Support Unit, the Deputy Head of the Russian Embassy to New Zealand, the Deputy High Commissioner of the High Commission of the United Kingdom to New Zealand and the Acting Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the United States to New Zealand. All speakers emphasised the enduring importance of the BWC in preventing the proliferation of biological weapons and called on the remaining non-States Parties in the region – Kiribati, Micronesia and Tuvalu – to join the Convention without delay.

The opening remarks were followed by a brief introduction to the EU Council Decision in support of the BWC, which was adopted earlier this year. The speaker described the package of projects authorised in the decision.

The speaker from World Health Organization highlighted the importance of biosafety and biosecurity measures, while the speaker from Pacific Islands Forum observed that, in their Member States, limited resources are available for the implementation of international instruments such as resolution 1540 (2004) and that their priorities are on economic, social and infrastructural development. The speaker from Parliamentarians for Global Action described his organisation's initiative for universality and implementation of the BWC, and implementation of resolution 1540 (2004).

During a session on biosecurity, biosafety and other bio-issues in the Pacific, facilitated by VERTIC, the participants heard brief presentations from Kiribati, Micronesia, Niue and Tuvalu about their efforts to join the BWC. This was followed by the CARICOM speaker who gave an overview of CARICOM's resolution 1540 (2004) implementation program, which has been running for several years in the Caribbean.

The 1540 Expert introduced resolution 1540 (2004) to those national participants who may not have been familiar with it, drew attention to the resolution's references to the international non-proliferation framework, and then described the links between the BWC and OPs 2, 3(a)-(b) and 3(c)-(d) of the resolution. His remarks were followed by the speaker from UNODA's regional office for Asia and the Pacific who described their efforts in the region to assist Member States with implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). His remarks were followed by closing remarks.

Additional Comments

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