

Information Note¹

- Event:** Seminar on the role of the Biological Weapons Convention in building Biosecurity Resilience and Promoting Disease Surveillance in Trinidad and Tobago
- Organizers:** CARICOM – UNSCR 1540 Programme and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in cooperation with the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit
- Date and Venue:** 8 July 2020, on a Zoom! platform
- Participants:** Representatives from Government of Trinidad and Tobago Ministries, including Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, Ministry of National Security, Bureau of Standards, Ministry of Attorney General and Legal Affairs, Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management, Ministry of Health, Customs and Excise, and the University of the West Indies; CARICOM Regional Implementation Coordinator for resolution 1540 (2004); Representatives of the Caribbean Public Health Agency, of UNODA’s Biological and Toxin Weapons Implementation Support Unit (BWC-ISU), the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the Stimson Center, Washington, DC. 1540 Committee Experts.

Background

By means of a letter dated 23 June 2020, Mr O'Neil Hamilton, the CARICOM Regional Implementation Coordinator for resolution 1540 (2004), invited the Chair of the 1540 Committee to nominate a representative to take part in a national Seminar on the role of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in building Biosecurity Resilience and Promoting Disease Surveillance in Trinidad

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.

and Tobago. The objective of the seminar was to help Trinidad and Tobago to effectively assess risk pertaining to biological threats and to adopt measures to address potential vulnerabilities. Deliberations would include a discussion on how to leverage implementation action on Operative Paragraph 3 of resolution 1540 (2004) and Article IV of the BWC to meet the challenges of reducing biological threats and would focus on relevant prohibitions and mandates governing the development, production and acquisition of biological agents.

This meeting was of direct relevance to the work of the 1540 Committee with regard to the following operative paragraphs (OPs) of resolutions 1540 (2004) and 2325 (2016):

- 1540:
 - OP 8 (a) in which the Security Council called upon States “to promote the universal adoption and full implementation, and, where necessary, strengthening of multilateral treaties to which they are parties, whose aim is to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons”; and
 - OP 8(b) in which the Council called upon States “to adopt national rules and regulations, where it has not yet been done, to ensure compliance with their commitments under the key multilateral non-proliferation treaties”; and
- 2325:
 - OP 12 in which the Security Council particularly noted “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”;
 - OP14 in which the Council recalled its decision that “all States shall 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 control over related materials”;
 - OP 15 in which the Council recalled its decision that “all States, in accordance with their national procedures, shall adopt and enforce appropriate effective laws for the prohibition of activities under paragraph 2 of resolution 1540 (2004)”;

- OP 23 in which the Council encouraged “relevant international, regional and subregional organizations to enhance cooperation and information-sharing with the 1540 Committee, on the issues related to the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004)”.

Highlights

The meeting was opened by Mr Garvin Pettier, a Director of the Ministry for Foreign and CARICOM Affairs. He said that the Seminar had been requested by Trinidad and Tobago and it demonstrated Trinidad and Tobago’s commitment to the BWC and to resolution 1540 (2004) and non-proliferation generally. The Seminar would help the authorities to assess and address the range of risks arising from the pandemic. The CARICOM Regional Implementation Coordinator for resolution 1540 (2004) noted that human resource and other resource challenges made it difficult for States in the CARICOM region to cover all 1540 reporting and implementation requirements. It was important to look across government and ensure potentially related activities were not confined to departmental silos.

The 1540 Experts described the requirements under resolution 1540 (2004) for States to implement measures to prevent exploitation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, means of delivery and related materials by non-State actors. The Experts noted that the focus of the Seminar, Biosecurity Resilience and Disease Surveillance, was potentially relevant to requirements of OP 3A/B which required States to have in place biosecurity measures. These included measures to account for, secure and physically protect relevant biological materials.

The Experts described the requirements of the resolution relating to border and export controls, noting the importance of focusing customs laws on WMD and related materials. The Experts also briefed the Seminar on progress regarding the 1540 Comprehensive Review.

This Seminar on the role of the Biological Weapons Convention in building Biosecurity Resilience and Promoting Disease Surveillance in Trinidad and Tobago was a useful opportunity to discuss the requirements of resolution 1540 (2004), and progress of the Comprehensive Reviews. Participants made clear that they looked forward to continuing engagement with the 1540 Committee.

Additional Comments

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