

Information Note¹

- Mission:** Regional Workshop for Latin America and the Caribbean on the Seventh Review Conference and National Implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention
- Date and Location:** 9-11 November 2011, Lima, Peru
- Organizers or Sponsors:** The Governments of Peru, the EU, and the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)
- Participantes:** **States:** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Jamaica, México, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Trinidad & Tobago. **international organizations:** the President of the VII Review Conference of the BWC, the American States Organization (OAS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Integration Central American System (SICA), Pan-American Health Organization (PHO/WHO), Brazilian Bio security Association (AuBio), 1540 Committee, and UNODA UN-LiRec. **NGO:** VERTIC

1. Objectives

- Promote implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) on biological weapons issues and inform officials on relevant elements of resolution 1977 (2011).
- Update information on the status of implementation of resolution 1540 (2004); and on assistance programmes relevant for implementation of resolution 1540.
- Encourage submission of additional information, including updates, future implementation plans, and assistance requests as found appropriate.
- Share experiences and lessons learned to facilitate implementation of resolution 1540, taking into account the Confidential Building Measures (CBM) that States are encouraged to submit to the BWC/I-SU.
- Establish new contacts with national implementing agencies and decision-makers in the biological area.
- Explore opportunities with participating organizations to improve cooperation on resolution 1540 as found appropriate.

¹ For information – not an official report. The views expressed here do not necessarily represent the view of the 1540 Committee nor of the organizers or participants in the workshop.

- Explore good practices on bio-security with international and regional organizations in particular for Latin American Countries.

2. Background

This Regional Latin American Workshop brought together government officials and experts from the region, the European Union, the United Nations and other international organizations as well as a number of non-government entities to discuss the Seventh Review Conference and national implementation of the Convention.

The workshop was an important opportunity to promote the submission by States of CBM, to call upon the need to build a more effective disease surveillance mechanism, to enhance national capacity building, and to promote cooperation with international, regional and sub-regional organizations.

The workshop also provided an opportunity for participants from the region to share ideas, identify common understandings and explore and express their regional views on the seventh Review Conference process.

3. Highlights and Discussion

The workshop took place with the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) under the auspices of the EU Joint Actions on the Biological Weapon Convention. It was structured in three sessions, where the following points were addressed by the participant States and organizations: The Biological Weapons Convention, Confidence Building Measures (CBM), national implementation and, particularly, national experiences and submission of the CBM to the BWC. During the opening session the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Peru welcomed the participants and expressed the high disposition of the Government of Peru to continue to support the Biological Weapons Convention.

The next sessions were devoted to Capacity Building Measures, the need for revision of some of the formats as well as the adjustment of some paragraphs to make them more amicable for the reader. During the second and third day, officials from different countries as well as international and regional organizations presented their national and regional experiences.

The 1540 expert delivered a presentation on the complementarity of implementing the BWC and resolution 1540 (2004), highlighting the key features of the resolution that affirm the support of the Security Council for the multilateral treaties that aim to eliminate or prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and call upon all States to promote their universal adoption and full implementation and, whenever necessary, the strengthening of multilateral treaties to which they are parties. Although the BWC and Resolution 1540 (2004) are different in scope and nature, they tend to be complementary as far as they reinforce each other in the achievement of the objectives expected from States.

An overview of the status of implementation of the resolution in the region was presented taking into consideration the Matrices of each State. The fewer measures taken in the area of biological weapons compared to those taken in the nuclear or chemical areas was also brought up as an issue.

The presentation of the appointed President of the Seventh Review Conference, Ambassador Paul van der Ijssel, was based on strengthening the BWC with the support of States, on enhancing a multilateral approach, on moving on to achieve a verification control regime, and to support a new mandate for the continuing of the ISU. Ambassador Van der Ijssel also pointed out that the impact of new challenges on technology and science should be addressed and discussed during intercessional meetings.

In relation to national implementation in the biological field presenters noted that a weak point of the BWC was a lack of an institutional organism, such as IAEA in the nuclear field or the OPCW for the CWC, to monitor the compliance by member States.

Experience was shared on partnership and information exchange between law enforcement and public health officials in the event of a bio-incident, noting that public health officials often deal with chemical and nuclear/radioactive fields as well as biological ones, and, while keeping the traditional focus on safety, more security-oriented controls can be incorporated, as required by operative paragraph 3 of resolution 1540.

4. Additional Comments

At the conclusion several recommendations or comments were made:

- The important opportunity the workshop represented to strengthen the BWC, promote the submission of CBM and national implementation of the Convention, taking into account the need for a more effective disease surveillance mechanism enhancing national capacities, and regional cooperation;
- In order to encourage the submission of additional information to expand and update the matrices, the 1540 expert requested participant States to keep in touch with the relevant officials in charge at their Permanent Missions in New York;
- To continue the implementation process, handle expected assistance requests and strengthen communication with the 1540 Committee experts for any further consultation or clarification; and,
- Points of contact in the New York permanent Missions need to be established or updated.

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