

Information Note¹

- Event:** Regional Workshop of the Eastern Partnership Countries under the European Union (EU) Joint Action in support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC)
- Organizers:** The Governments of Moldova, the EU, and the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) in Geneva
- Date and Venue:** 22-24 June 2011, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova
- Participants:** *States:* Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Germany, Moldova, Portugal, Ukraine, and the United States of America (USA)
Organizations: UNODA in Geneva; EU; United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI); 1540 Committee; and the World Health Organization (WCO)
Other Expertise: University of Bradford and the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC)

1. Objectives of the workshop

The aim of the workshop was to bring together officials and experts working in various areas of BTWC to share experiences, exchange information and build a regional cooperative network among the Eastern Partnership member States and with the European Union and international organizations.

2. Background

The EU is promoting the BTWC in its regular political dialogue meetings. Based on the positive experience of its 2006 Joint Action in support of the implementation of the BTWC, it adopted a second Joint Action in November 2008 with the aim of building a sustainable partnership with the recipient countries connected with the 2011 BTWC Review Process. The main areas of support are, *inter alia*, the universalization of the Convention by promoting accession to the BTWC in all geographical regions, the enhancement of understanding of the BTWC among the relevant national authorities and sub-regional networks, and national implementation of the Convention by adopting national legislation and administrative measures to enforce them effectively.

In the effort to increase cooperation with other international bodies, the 1540 Committee experts participated in a similar meeting in Abuja, Nigeria in 2010 and will participate in a similar meeting in Manila, the Philippines, also in June 2011.

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.

3. **Highlights**

The presentations identified the national legal framework for biorisks and their management in participating states, the challenges of implementing these measures, and anticipated next steps. The workshop also identified several new or evolving international and national standards, guidance, and effective practices for managing biorisks, such as February 2008 European Committee for Standardization (CEN) Workshop Agreement (CWA) 15793 “Laboratory Biorisk management standard” that puts biosecurity in a biosafety context, and the WHO guidance for 2011-2012 on the transport of infectious agents. The participants examined how the participating states engage in regional and international cooperation, as well as their internal efforts to coordinate their inter-agency community. States and international organizations also shared information on requests for, and offers of, assistance. Moldova also allowed the participants in the workshop access to the Biosafety Level 3 Laboratory at their National Centre for Public Health, which furthered their understanding of Moldovan biosafety and biosecurity policies and practices.

4. **Additional comments**

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