

## Information Note<sup>1</sup>

- Event:** *Regional Workshop on National Implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention for Central America and the Caribbean*
- Organizers:** The Government of Mexico and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) - Geneva, through the European Union's Action in Support of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC Action)
- Date and venue:** 13-14 November 2013, Mexico City, Mexico
- Participants:** *States:* Antigua and Barbuda; Costa Rica; Cuba; Dominican Republic; El Salvador; Haiti; Jamaica; Mexico, Panama; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; Trinidad and Tobago
- International organizations:* 1540 Committee Group of Experts; Biological Weapons Convention-Implementation Support Unit (BWC-ISU); Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Regional Implementation Coordinator for UNSCR 1540; European Union; INTERPOL; Organization for American States, Inter-American Committee against terrorism (OAS/CICTE); Pan American Health organization (PAHO)/ World Health Organization (WHO); UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (Geneva Branch); UN Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC).
- Non-Governmental Organizations, Industry, Academia, and Other Entities:* independent consultant (former SICA Regional Implementation Coordinator for UNSCR 1540); Institute of International Relations/ Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; VERTIC.

### 1. **Objectives of the workshop**

The main objectives of the workshop were to enhance understanding of the BWC among national authorities, strengthen regional networking to promote implementation of the BWC, identification of requirements and needs for enhancing implementation of the BWC, and the creation of and/or support for national and regional biosafety associations. In order to reinforce capacities to implement the Convention at the national and regional level topics relevant to BWC implementation (such as legislation, control regimes, regulations, guidelines, enforcement and others) which are also overlapping significantly with the obligations under resolution 1540 (2004) and its provisions on domestic control of BW-related materials.

### 2. **Background**

The workshop is part of a series of such events to be organized in various regions under the auspices of the European Union Council's Decision in Support of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC Action) by the UNODA-Geneva (acting as the implementing agency) and national partners. The BWC Action was mandated by the Council decision 2012/421/CFSP, adopted on 23 July 2012 by the Council of the European Union. It is broadly anchored in the European Union's Common Position for the Seventh Review Conference of the BWC (Council Decision 2011/429/CFSP of 18 July 2011; available online at:

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

[http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/\(httpAssets\)/FB77EE84B5729118C1257AC3003D9A5D/\\$file/Council+Decision+2011-429-CFSP+EU+Position+7RC.pdf](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/FB77EE84B5729118C1257AC3003D9A5D/$file/Council+Decision+2011-429-CFSP+EU+Position+7RC.pdf)) and focuses in particular on those aspects on which consensus was reached at the Seventh Review Conference held in 2011.

The BWC Action aims to support the BWC on the international, regional and national levels through three major projects: universality and national implementation; confidence in compliance; and strengthening international cooperation and encouraging international discussion on the future of the BWC.

The workshop was organized in ten sessions (on ‘*Bioterrorism Threats*’; ‘*National Implementation and Confidence Building Measures*’; ‘*Cooperation and exchange of Information on the Progress Made in Science and Technology in Relation to the BWC*’; ‘*Best Practices: Implementation of National Measures to Deter, Prevent, and Respond to Biological Incidents, Threats or Risks*’; ‘*Biorisk Management, Biosafety and Biosecurity*’; ‘*Global Health Security: Epidemiological Surveillance and Response to Disease Outbreaks, Bioincidents and Deliberate Use*’; ‘*Confidence-building Measures (CBMs)*’; ‘*Cooperation and Assistance on the International Level*’; ‘*Strengthening of Regional Cooperation and the Creation of Networks of Experts and Focal Points*’; and ‘*Current Status and Ways Forward for Strengthening BWC National Implementation*’, respectively). The formal presentations were followed by roundtable discussions based on pre-determined questions related to national implementation and CBMs; biorisk management, biosafety and biosecurity; developments in science & technology; and national and regional preparedness. Participants were asked inter alia to answer the question whether States should “*coordinate CBRN legislation (omnibus CBRN law, a CBW law, a BTWC Act or manifold laws covering BTWC obligations (e.g. penal law, customs/border control, quarantine, human/animal/plant health etc.) and how to address overlap/synergies between BTWC, UNSCR 1540, IHR (2005), CWC*”.

As in the previous two regional workshops organized under the auspices of the BWC Action this year, several participants noted in their presentations and discussions the overlap and synergy between the obligations of resolution 1540 (2004) and BWC and national implementation efforts to address them holistically. Joint participation of the 1540 Committee Group of Experts, CARICOM 1540 Regional Coordinator, and the former SICA 1540 Regional Coordinator also helped defining a common operational perspective for the respective regions, and ensured coordinated outreach to national authorities including on identifying regional and international opportunities for assistance.

### 3. Highlights

Welcome and opening remarks were given by Minister Juan Sandoval Mendiola, Director General for the United Nations Organizations, Secretariat Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico; Mr. Amador Sanchez Rico, Head of the political Section, European Union Delegation to Mexico; and Dr. Piers Millet, Deputy Head, BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU). Dr. Millet also delivered a keynote address on the “*Biological Weapons Convention: From International Obligation to Effective National Action*” that emphasized inter alia the BWC forum as a “network of networks” including the network of departments/agencies/ministries, an international network (1540 Committee, OPCW, WHO, OIE, FAO, INTERPOL), a network of States and the network of networks of non-governmental stakeholders (industry, professional associations, scientific organizations, policy and academic networks). Dr. Millet also pointed out that the present workshop is intended as a forum for discussing regional needs and circumstances, examining different approaches to shared challenges, looking at possible solutions and best practices in various settings, and generating ideas for constructive, practical action. In this regard, the BWC has an important role to play in developing regional capabilities for governance and control including coordination of efforts, within and across national systems, and incorporating the capacities and contributions of the different sectors.

Statements and/or formal presentations were delivered by all states representatives (from Antigua and Barbuda; Costa Rica; Cuba; Dominican Republic; El Salvador; Haiti; Jamaica; Mexico, Panama; Saint Kitts and

Nevis; Saint Lucia; and Trinidad and Tobago). The majority of participating States emphasized the synergies between resolution 1540 (2004) and the BWC obligations.

The CARICOM 1540 Regional Coordinator discussed the coordination and support of capacity-building activities in the CARICOM Member States for the implementation of resolution 1540 and the development of related legal, regulatory, administrative and enforcement Infrastructure. Specifically, the Regional Coordinator, in partnership with several of the above-listed inter-governmental organizations has organized a broad range of seminars, workshops, training exercises and national consultations aimed at building regional capacity to prevent WMD proliferation and to institute sustainable systems and processes within CARICOM Member States to control related materials and prevent illicit trafficking. In that regard, the CARICOM Program remains focused on working with CARICOM Members to enact strategic trade legislation and regulations with the view to controlling the export, re-export, import, transit, transshipment or brokering of dual-use materials that can be used in the development of chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons.

The 1540 Committee expert presented on “*United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 and the Biological Weapons Convention: Perspectives on Central America and the Caribbean*” and on “*Biological Risk Management and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540: Implementation and Technical Assistance in Central America and the Caribbean*”, respectively. She also chaired the roundtables on “*Bioterrorism Threats*” and the one on “*Best Practices: Implementation of National Measures to Deter, Prevent, and Respond to Biological Incidents, Threats or Risks*”.

With regard to Central America, the 1540 expert noted that the reports from El Salvador and Guatemala are from 2005 and 2004, respectively, and the committee would appreciate updates on national implementation measures (per correspondence from Chair sent to States in February 2013). With the exception of Mexico and Panama, the other Central American States (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua) have yet to submit to the committee a national point of contact.

With regard to the Caribbean States, the 1540 expert noted that with the exception of Jamaica, most national reports are several years old and only one State (Antigua and Barbuda) submitted a national point of contact to the committee. In addition, Haiti is one of the 22 non-reporting States.

The 1540 expert also emphasized the support available from the CARICOM 1540 regional Coordinator and the Group of experts with regard to updating national reports, initial submission or notification of national points of contact. The role of the CARICOM 1540 Regional Coordinator with assisting Caribbean States was illustrated with excerpts from the national report submitted by Jamaica to the 1540 Committee on 30 May 2013. With regard to the matchmaking role of the 1540 Committee, the expert noted a successful example (USA providing continued support for the position of CARICOM 1540 Regional Coordinator) and that WHO, OIE, and INTERPOL notified the committee this year of their assistance programs which may strengthen in the future the ability of the committee to match the requests for assistance in the bio area (currently from 16 States including five from Central America and the Caribbean: Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, Guatemala, and Mexico) with offers of assistance from these organizations and those from States specifically offering assistance with BWC implementation as well as in biorisk management and biosafety/biosecurity.

#### 4. **Additional comments**

For further information, please contact the 1540 Committee’s Group of Experts by e-mail at [1540experts@un.org](mailto:1540experts@un.org).