

Information Note¹

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- Event:** The Meeting of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention
- Organizers:** Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) States Parties and the Implementation Support Unit (ISU)
- Date and Venue:** 14-18 December 2015, Geneva, Switzerland
- Participants:** Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bhutan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Holy See, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Yemen.

UN entities, international/regional organizations, and other non-governmental organizations (observers) :

The United Nations Security Council 1540 Committee and its Group of Experts, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA);

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the European Union, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the League of Arab States, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE);

¹ For information – not an official report. The views expressed here do not necessarily represent those of the 1540 Committee or of the organisers or participants in the event.

Twenty seven non-governmental organizations and research institutes.

Background

On 1 July 2013 the then Chairman of the BWC Meeting of States Parties, invited the Committee to participate in the Meetings of State Parties of the BWC in 2015, 2014 and 2015.

The Meeting of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention was chaired by Ambassador Mazlan Muhammad of Malaysia. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and promote common understanding and effective action on improving the implementation and effectiveness of the BWC.

In accordance with the decision of the Seventh Review Conference, the meeting considered the work of the Meeting of Experts (10-14 August 2015) on the three standing agenda items (cooperation and assistance, with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation and assistance under Article X; review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention; and strengthening national implementation), as well as the biennial item on how to strengthen implementation of Article VII, including consideration of detailed procedures and mechanisms for the provision of assistance and cooperation by States Parties.

Overview

In their opening statements many delegations noted that 2015 marked the 40th anniversary of the entry into force of the BWC. The new parties joining the Convention during this year, Andorra and Mauritania, were welcomed; this brings the total number of States Parties to 173

Four observer organizations, European Union, International Committee of the Red Cross, 1540 Committee, G7 Global Partnership also made a statement in the general debate. Following the general debate, during an informal session the Meeting heard statements from 15 non-governmental organizations and research institutes.

The 1540 Committee Member and 1540 Committee expert attended the BWC Meeting of States Parties. The 1540 Committee Member made a statement on behalf of the Chair of the 1540 Committee highlighting the tradition of close collaboration between the 1540 Committee as a United Nations Security Council's subsidiary body and the BWC with a view to sharing knowledge, views and effective practices toward their common goals of mitigating increasing threats to international peace and security posed by biological and toxin weapons.

There were three topics which were standing agenda items for the third inter-sessional process:

Cooperation and Assistance

States Parties recalled their legal obligation to facilitate and their right to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological

information for the use of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins for peaceful purposes and not to hamper the economic and technological development of States Parties.

Review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention

Many States noted that rapid advances in the life sciences mean the BWC operates within a rapidly changing science and technology context which changes the nature of challenges States Parties to the Convention may need to counter as well as providing new opportunities for peaceful uses.

Strengthening national implementation

States Parties agreed to further address ways and means to enhance national implementation, sharing best practices and experiences, including the voluntary exchange of information among States Parties on their national implementation, enforcement of national legislation, strengthening of national institutions and coordination among national law enforcement institutions.

The meeting also discussed the topic of strengthening of the implementation of Article VII, including consideration of detailed procedures and mechanisms for the provision of assistance and cooperation by States Parties.

A number of side events were held during the meeting, including “Steps Toward Effective Biological Security Education” (Bradford University), “1925–2015: The Geneva Protocol at 90”, (UNIDIR and France), “Lessons Learned and Implications of the Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak for the BWC: Update on Research Project to Inform Recommendations for the 8th Review Conference”, “Proposal for establishment of a database for assistance in the framework of Article VII of the BWC” (France and India) and “Biosafety and Security: Laboratory Procedures and Personnel Ethics in Developing Countries” (Green Cross International).

A three-week Review Conference is to be held in Geneva 7-25 November 2017. There will be two Preparatory Committee meetings: the first, “up to two days”, 26-27 April and the second 8-12 August.

4. Additional Comments

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