

Information Note¹

- Event:** Workshop on the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)
- Organizers:** The Government of Burkina Faso, in collaboration with the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA (Geneva)) and the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC)
- Date and Venue:** 21-22 October 2014, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
- Participants:** Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Animal Resources Ministry of Research and Innovation (in the person of the National Authority for the Chemical Weapons Convention), Ouagadougou National Training and Research Centre on Malaria (Centre national de recherche et de formation sur le paludisme de Ouagadougou), Bobo-Dioulasso Muraz Centre (Centre Muraz de Bobo-Dioulasso)
- Belgium (Medical Service Corps), Moroccan Biosafety Association, Manchester University (Faculty of Life Sciences)
- UNODA, UNREC, and a former 1540 Committee expert

1. Objectives

- The participation of a former 1540 Committee expert took place in the context of sub-paragraph 22(d) of resolution 1977 (2011), which invites the 1540 Committee to consider developing ways to utilize and maintain expertise, including, in particular, of former experts of the group, that could be made available for specific missions and assistance needs regarding the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). As no 1540 Committee expert was available, the use of a former expert currently based in Africa was considered, and decided upon by the 1540 Committee.
- The former 1540 Committee expert was invited to deliver a presentation on complementarities between the BWC and resolution 1540 (2004), highlighting that implementing the BWC contributes to implementing resolution 1540 (2004), and vice-versa.
- Participating in the workshop offered an opportunity also to meet with national stakeholders involved in the visit conducted by the 1540 Committee to Burkina Faso on 11-15 November 2013, and discuss measures undertaken since then.

2. Background

- The activity was organized with financial support from the European Union (EU), in the context of the EU Council Decision 2012/421/CFSP of 23 July 2012 in support of the BWC, and in

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particular its Project 2 which aims to “enhance national capabilities for implementing obligations under the BWC, including confidence-building-measures submissions, by means of legislation, administrative and enforcement measures, awareness raising, codes of conduct, standards on bio-safety and bio-security, and establishment of modalities for national coordination through extended assistance programs” (see <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32012D0421>).

- As an outcome of the visit of the 1540 Committee hosted by Burkina Faso on 11-15 November 2013, the participants agreed on the necessity to draft a 1540 National Implementation Action Plan (NIAP), and proposed to establish a working group to this end. They also agreed on the need to establish an inter-agency coordination mechanism, which will oversee monitoring and facilitating the overall implementation of the NAP and of resolution 1540 in all its aspects (see <http://www.un.org/en/sc/1540/transparency-and-outreach/outreach-events/pdf/Information%20Note%20Burkina%20Faso%202013-73.pdf>).

3. **Highlights**

Opening session

The **Director-General for multilateral affairs in Burkina Faso’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs** underscored the importance of the BWC, which he described as the cornerstone of the efforts of the scientific community towards peaceful uses, and an important pillar of international security. Highlighting that Burkina Faso has acceded to the BWC as early as 17 April 1991, H.E. Mr. **Saïdou Zongo** noted that further efforts need to be undertaken at the national level. This is why, he explained, Burkina Faso decided to request technical assistance for the establishment of an inter-agency body, which will coordinate implementation efforts. The representative of Burkina Faso expressed appreciation for the support provided by the EU through the BWC Implementation Support Unit (BWC ISU).

The **Head of the European Union Delegation in Burkina Faso** recalled the principles of efficient multilateralism, prevention and cooperation framing the European Union (EU) 2003 Strategy against proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. **H.E. Mr. Alain Holleville** presented the EU Council Decision of 23 July 2012 in support of the BWC, and underscored that the EU will continue to provide technical assistance to States that express a need for such assistance. Since the adoption of the 1st EU Joint Action in support of the BWC in 2006, the EU has already delivered assistance on BWC-related matters to 16 States.

The representative of the **UNREC** thanked the EU for its support, and recognized the leading role played by Burkina Faso, which was among the first African States to accede to the BWC. **Mr. Alain Botre** underscored the importance of the BWC and of other important international instruments, including those adopted in the context of the African Union to prevent and combat terrorism. The UNREC representative highlighted resolution 1540 (2004), “an important element of the international architecture to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which reinforces regional and international cooperation”.

The representative of **UNODA (Geneva)** recognized the support provided by the EU, which made the workshop possible as well as other activities conducted by UNODA Geneva Branch in liaison with the BWC ISU. **Ms Karin Hjalmarsson** expressed appreciation to the Government of Burkina Faso, including colleagues in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation, for their interest in strengthening implementation of the BWC and in engaging a wide range of stakeholders. She thanked UNREC and the various experts participating in the activity for their contribution.

Working sessions

The sessions were moderated by **Colonel Saïdou Ouedraogo**, Director for Peacekeeping and Military Cooperation at Burkina Faso's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation. Presentations by the international experts were followed by active discussions among all participants.

The following topics were covered:

- BWC: objectives, key concepts, rights and obligations.
- The experience of Belgium in involving national stakeholders.
- Biosecurity, biosafety and the role of the civil society.
- Convergence and complementarities between resolution 1540 (2004) and the BWC.
- The role of scientists in implementing the BWC.
- Confidence-building measures (CBM): process and tools.
- Advances in science and technology, and possible challenges to the BWC.
- International cooperation in implementing the BWC.
- Regional cooperation in implementing the BWC.

Concluding ceremony

Closing statements were delivered by Ms. Karin Hjalmarsson (UNODA Geneva) Mr. Alain Botre (UNREC) and H.E. Mr. Saïdou Zongo Director-General for multilateral affairs in Burkina Faso's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

4. **Additional comments**

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