

VERIFICATION RESEARCH, TRAINING AND INFORMATION CENTRE

Development House, 56–64 Leonard Street
London EC2A 4LT, United Kingdom

Tel +44 (0)20 7065 0880
Fax +44 (0)20 7065 0890
Website www.vertic.org

STATEMENT BY VERTIC TO THE 2014 MEETING OF EXPERTS TO THE 1972 BIOLOGICAL AND TOXIN WEAPONS CONVENTION

Delivered by Yasemin Balci, Legal Officer

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Check against delivery

Mr Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Universality of the Biological Weapons Convention and its implementation through domestic legislation is a key objective of States Parties, the Implementation Support Unit, related international organisations and civil society. VERTIC continues to co-operate with all of these actors to make its contribution to this effort. For example, in February this year, VERTIC attended a workshop organized by the BWC Action on the ratification and national implementation of the BWC in Nepal, and led a drafting workshop for Nepal's BWC bill in June. We also co-organised a drafting workshop for a BWC bill with the government of Malawi, following their ratification of the Convention in April last year. Again with the BWC Action, we contributed to an exchange of regional best practices on establishing a National Authority for the BWC in Colombia last March.

Joining the Biological Weapons Convention is a crucial step in supporting the global norm against biological weapons, and adopting legislation is necessary to prohibit and prevent biological weapons at the national level. Even after taking these two important steps, however, continued diligence is required to ensure that incidents with biological agents and toxins are prevented. As a United States congressman said in June in response to the potential exposure of workers from the CDC (the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) to anthrax: “it doesn't take much of a breach to create a significant problem for a significant number of people”.¹ And as the prominent scientific journal *Nature* noted in an editorial: “if an accident can happen at the CDC, then it can happen anywhere.”²

States should therefore establish, through legal and other avenues, mechanisms for reviewing and improving their implementation measures. VERTIC, for its part, has updated its implementation tools to ensure their quality and effectiveness. Our revised “Legislative Guide to National Implementation of UN

¹ David Morgan, ‘CDC anthrax scare raises worries in U.S. Congress about lab safety’ *Reuters* (Washington DC, 20 June 2014) available at <www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/20/usa-anthrax-congress-idUSL2N0P11F320140620>.

² Editorial, ‘Biosafety in the balance’ 510 *Nature* 443, 26 June 2014, available at <www.nature.com/polopoly_fs/1.15447!/menu/main/topColumns/topLeftColumn/pdf/510443a.pdf>.



Security Council Resolution 1540” is now available on our website and on our CD. Additionally, the scope of our CD now extends to implementation tools for international instruments across the CBRN spectrum, including the “National Legislation Implementation Kit for Nuclear Security”, which VERTIC developed at the request of the government of Indonesia as its gift to the Nuclear Security Summit in March this year.

We encourage all States Parties and others gathered here in Geneva to do their utmost to strengthen the Convention. Decisions taken, assistance offered, and the atmosphere created at the international level invariably affect activities and the level of interest at the national level. Officials in various ministries and technical experts in countries around the world look for international action and guidance to support their efforts to prohibit biological weapons and to prevent the natural, accidental and intentional release of biological agents and toxins.

Thank you Mr Chair.

Implementation Documents for the BWC and UN Security Council Resolution 1540 on VERTIC’s NIM CD (available on the table outside the plenary room):

National Implementation:

- Sample Act for National Implementation of the BWC and UNSCR 1540 (*in Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish*)
- Regulatory Guidelines for National Implementation of the BWC and UNSCR 1540 (*in Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish*)
- International Committee of the Red Cross-VERTIC Model Law for the BWC (*in Arabic, English, Spanish*)

Accession to/Ratification of the BWC:

- Model Instrument of Accession (*in English, French, Portuguese, Spanish*)
- Model Instrument of Ratification (*in English, French, Spanish*)
- Contact details of the Depositaries (*in English*)

Background information:

- BWC text (*in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish*)
- Fact Sheet 7: National Implementation Measures for the BWC (*in Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish*)
- Fact Sheet 10: National Authority for the BWC (*in Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish*)
- BioWeapons Prevention Project Reader (*in English*)

- UNSCR 1540 text (*in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish*)
- Fact Sheet 6: National Implementation Measures for UNSCR 1540 (*in Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish*)
- Legislative Guide to National Implementation of UNSCR 1540 (*in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish*)