

State parties agree on BWC intersessional programme

States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) gathered from 4 to 8 December 2017 for their annual meeting in Geneva, Switzerland. This Meeting of States Parties (MSP) was of particular importance. Given the lack of a substantive outcome at the Eighth Review Conference in November 2016, the meeting was mandated to seek to make progress on issues of substance and process for the period before the Ninth Review Conference that will take place in 2021, with a view to reaching consensus on an intersessional process. Ambassador Amandeep Singh Gill of India chaired the meeting with Ambassador Michael Biontino of Germany and Ambassador Juraj Podhorský of Slovakia serving as the Vice-Chairs. The meeting was regarded as highly successful as states parties agreed on the adoption of a substantive Intersessional Programme (ISP) for the period 2018-2020. As a result, each year there will be five Meetings of Experts with a total duration of eight days and a four-day Meeting of States Parties in order to discuss, and promote common understanding and effective action on cooperation and assistance; science and technology; national implementation; assistance, response and preparedness; and institutional strengthening of the Convention.

Proceedings

The MSP saw both open and closed-door sessions and also an unprecedented number of 17 side events. The first day, 4 December, was dedicated to the opening formalities and the general debate, the latter of which continued into the second day. This was followed by intense discussions on issues of substance and process for the period before the next Review Conference, which covered most of the rest of the week. On 6 December, the Meeting considered financial matters and also received a briefing from the Chief of the Financial

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Resource Management Service of the United Nations Office at Geneva. On 7 December, a session was devoted to considering progress with universalization of the Convention and the annual report of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU). The meeting closed on Friday 8 November with the adoption of the report.

The MSP attracted a large number of experts from a variety of stakeholder groups, totaling approximately 700 participants. 116 states parties, two signatory states (Syria and Tanzania) and two States not party (Israel and Namibia) participated in the meeting. Furthermore, three UN agencies, nine specialized agencies and regional intergovernmental organizations and 36 non-governmental organizations and research institutes attended the event. Despite some skepticism and concerns due to the failure of the Eighth Review Conference to reach an agreement on an intersessional process, the meeting concluded successfully thanks to states parties' readiness to engage in constructive negotiations, flexibility to reach consensual decisions and determination to move the Convention forward. At the end of the MSP, many delegations expressed their congratulations to Ambassador Gill for his outstanding abilities in navigating states parties through a successful meeting and overcoming different national and regional different positions.

From its opening day, the MSP was characterized by a constructive attitude and a high level of engagement and determination displayed by all participants. For example, 69 states parties, nine international organizations and 12 non-governmental organizations and research institutes took the floor during the General Debate to express national/regional priorities and make suggestions for the way forward.

Many of these statements expressed the need to make substantive progress before the next Review Conference with a view to strengthen the Convention and enhance the implementation of all its Articles in a balanced, non-discriminatory and comprehensive manner. Repeatedly, delegations stressed the need to monitor the rapid developments in science and technology in the framework of the intersessional process, called

for strengthened national implementation, enhancing international cooperation and underlined the need for protection and assistance in case a state party is exposed to danger as a result of violation of the Convention.

The high level of engagement by states parties was also illustrated by the submission of 24 working papers which informed on recent actions taken to strengthen the Convention and outlined policy positions. In addition, at the end of the first day Ambassador Gill presented under his own responsibility as Chair of the MSP, a document highlighting key proposals made by states parties in the 83 Working Papers that were submitted to the Eighth Review Conference and its Preparatory Committee (BWC/MSP/2017/CRP.1). The document clustered these working papers into seven thematic areas: (a) Institutional Strengthening; (b) Science & Technology Review; (c) National Implementation; (d) International Cooperation and Exchange for Peaceful Purposes; (e) Assistance in case of use, investigation, consultations regarding an allegation; (f) Confidence-Building and Transparency Measures; (g) Others. The Chair's paper had the purpose to serve as an aide memoire, with a view to facilitating discussion on the meeting's main agenda item.

States parties provided many concrete inputs into the deliberations at the MSP. Particular interest was raised by a joint working paper ('Elements of a Possible Intersessional Process') submitted on 30 November by the three BWC Depositary states - the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States (BWC/MSP/2017/WP.10). This working paper drew on the efforts of the President of the Eighth Review Conference (BWC/CONE.VIII/CRP.3), Ambassador György Molnar and took into account the various concerns and suggestions for improvement offered during consultations since then. Furthermore, Venezuela on behalf of the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States (NAM) also submitted a working paper on the intersessional programme that provided food for thought into the meeting's deliberations (BWC/MSP/2017/WP.21). Cuba also presented its national vision on the intersessional programme, which served as another key source for consideration among States Parties

(BWC/MSP/2017/WP.8). Cuba proposed that “States Parties should continue negotiations on a legally binding instrument or at least initiate discussions on this matter of common interest. There is also a priority to reinforce international cooperation to facilitate the full, comprehensive, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article X.”

Against the backdrop of the different proposals and facilitated by an informal compilation paper prepared by the Chair, intense deliberations took place during several sessions. Besides finding agreement on the main topics to be considered for the 2018-2020 ISP, animated debates also took place between States Parties on the duration of the ISP. While some states parties spoke out in support of ten additional days of meetings on top of the five days already agreed at the Eighth Review Conference, others took a more limited approach and argued in favor of only five additional meeting days. Recognizing the need to balance an ambition to improve the ISP within the constraints—both financial and human resources—facing states parties, Ambassador Gill skillfully brokered a compromise among states parties.

Outcome

Following intense discussions, states parties agreed that 12 days be allocated to the intersessional programme each year during 2018-2020, with the aim of strengthening the implementation of all articles of the Convention in order to better respond to current challenges. Of the 12 days, eight will be devoted to the Meetings of Experts, which will have to take place at least three months before the annual MSP, which will be of four-days duration and will be held in Geneva every December. The five Meetings of Experts (MXs) will be devoted to the following issues:

MX1: Cooperation and assistance, with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation and assistance under Article X (two days)

- Consideration of the reports of the states parties on their full and comprehensive implementation of all provisions of Article X;

- Review of the report by the ISU on the operation of the assistance and cooperation database established by the Seventh Review Conference and renewed by the Eighth Review Conference and consideration of its further operationalization, including measures to further strengthen the operation of the database, including in the light of BWC/MSP/2017/4;
- Identification of challenges and obstacles to developing international cooperation, assistance and exchange in the biological sciences and technology, including equipment and material, for peaceful purposes to their full potential, and possible ways and means of overcoming these;
- Development of guidelines and procedures for mobilizing resources, including financial resources on a voluntary basis to address gaps and needs;
- Facilitation of education, training, exchange and twinning programs and other means of developing human resources in biological sciences and technology related to implementation of the Convention, particularly in developing countries;
- Promotion of capacity building, through international cooperation, in biosafety and biosecurity and for detecting, reporting and responding to outbreaks of infectious disease or biological weapons attacks, including in the areas of preparedness, response, and crisis management and mitigation; and
- Collaboration with international organizations and networks related to combating infectious diseases at all levels, as well as regional and sub-regional cooperation to promote implementation of all articles of the Convention.

MX2: Review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention (two days)

- Review of science and technology developments relevant to the Convention, including for the enhanced implementation of all articles of the Convention as well as the identification of potential benefits and risks of new science and technology developments relevant to the Con-

vention, with a particular attention to positive implications;

- Biological risk assessment and management;
- Development of a voluntary model code of conduct for biological scientists and all relevant personnel, and biosecurity education, by drawing on the work already done on this issue in the context of the Convention, adaptable to national requirements;
- In 2018, the MX2 will address the specific topic of genome editing, taking into consideration, as appropriate, the issues identified above; and
- Any other science and technology developments of relevance to the Convention and also to the activities of relevant multilateral organizations such as the WHO, OIE, FAO, IPPC and OPCW.

MX3: Strengthening national implementation (one day)

- Measures related to Article IV of the Convention;
- CBM submissions in terms of quantity and quality;
- Various ways to promote transparency and confidence building under the Convention;
- Role of international cooperation and assistance under Article X, in support of strengthening the implementation of the Convention; and
- Issues related to Article III, including effective measures of export control, in full conformity with all Articles of the Convention, including Article X.

MX4: Assistance, response and preparedness (two days)

- Practical challenges facing the implementation of Article VII, and possible solutions;
- A set of guidelines and formats to assist a state party, if required, when submitting an application for assistance in the framework of Article VII;
- Procedures, including the establishment and use of the assistance database, to improve the prompt and efficient response without preconditions to a request of assistance

by a state party under Article VII, and coordination and cooperation among states parties and with relevant international and regional organizations such as WHO, OIE and FAO, as appropriate;

- Examination of how the concept of mobile biomedical units might contribute to effective assistance, response and preparation with a view to enhancing implementation of the Convention;
- Exploration of approaches by which states parties, individually or collectively, might contribute to the strengthening of international response capabilities for infectious disease outbreaks, whether natural or deliberate in origin; and
- Exploration of means to prepare for, respond to and render assistance in case of the possible hostile use of biological agents and toxins against agriculture, livestock as well as the natural environment.

MX5: Institutional strengthening of the Convention (one day)

Consideration of the full range of approaches and options to further strengthen the Convention and its functioning through possible additional legal measures or other measures in the framework of the Convention.

In addition, states parties reached consensus on the following:

- Reaffirming previous intersessional programmes from 2003-2015 and retaining the previous structures: annual Meetings of States Parties preceded by annual Meetings of Experts;
- The purpose of the intersessional programme is to discuss, and promote common understanding and effective action on those issues identified for inclusion in the intersessional programme;
- The MSPs will be chaired by a representative of the Eastern European Group (EEG) in 2018, a representative of the Western Group (WG) in 2019 and a representative of the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and Other States in 2020. The annual Chair will be sup-

ported by two annual vice-chairs, one from each of the other two regional groups;

- A rotation system will be applied for the chairmanship of the Meetings of Experts to guarantee full and equal representation (see below table);

MSP	MX 1	MX 2	MX 3	MX 4	MX 5	
2018	EEG	NAM	NAM	WG	WG	EEG
2019	WG	EEG	EEG	NAM	NAM	WG
2020	NAM	WG	WG	EEG	EEG	NAM

- Maximum use would be made of the Sponsorship Programme funded by voluntary contributions in order to facilitate participation of developing states parties in the meetings of the intersessional programme; and
- In addition to the reports of the Meetings of Experts, the Meetings of States Parties will consider the annual reports of the Implementation Support Unit and progress on universality.

Assessment and conclusions

The outcome of the 2017 MSP can be considered a major success for several reasons. First, it reaffirmed states parties' willingness to find a common ground in the promotion of multilateral disarmament and in the fight against biological weapons. Delegates were able to overcome divergent ideas by finding consensus on a balanced and forward-looking agreement that takes into account lessons of the past with new and innovative ideas. Second, the missed opportunity at the Eighth Review Conference has been finally overcome. Delegates participated in the meeting ready to negotiate and keen to avoid another failure. Their great determination about the necessity to move forward led to final agreement about the way ahead and paved the way for a renewed intersessional programme from 2018 to 2020. The importance of this achievement should not be underestimated. Third, the success of the meeting can also be attributed to a considerable extent to the negotiation skills of Ambassador Gill who underlined that "the successful adoption of the inter-sessional programme is especially welcome at a time of rapid scientific and tech-

nological progress."

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The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

The EU and the BWC: support and strategic renewal for global biosecurity

The 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the oldest weapons-ban treaty, has meagre institutional means at its disposal to support its implementation. This is especially true when compared with the full-fledged organisations that promote and verify the implementation of treaties on other types of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Whereas some 67 million Euros will be allocated to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) by its Member States in 2017, the BWC has a yearly budget of approximately 1 million Euros. In response to this long-standing gap, since 2006 the European Union has provided support to the BWC in the form of successive Joint Actions and Council Decisions. Totalling 6.3 million Euros to date, this support, renewed in 2008, 2011 and 2016, has contributed to deeper and wider implementation of the BWC across Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Middle East.

The latest Council Decision, adopted in January 2016, is currently being implemented by the Geneva Branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, in close collaboration with the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU). Council Decision 2016/51 was adopted within the framework of the 2003 EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, a document dedicated to addressing the threat of WMD and adopted in the wake of the first EU Security Strategy. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the inter-governmental adoption process of Council Decision 2016/51 came more than a decade after 2003 and effectively overlapped with the formulation of the EU's second holistic strategic vision, the Global Strategy adopted in June 2016. The latter has been assessed to have deprioritized WMD disarmament and non-proliferation in the EU's foreign policy agenda, especially in the absence of a renewed WMD-specific strategy (Lars-Erik Lundin, *The European Union and Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Follow-On to the Global Strategy? Non-Proliferation Papers*

No. 58, May 2017).

Adopted at the crossroad of these two EU strategies, does Council Decision 2016/51 signal strategic renewal for biosecurity or a waning attention to this class of WMD? Building on past experience, bringing together more stakeholders and raising ambitions for the future of the BWC regime, the EU's current support for the Convention seems to indicate an increasing effort to mitigate the risks posed by biological weapons.

Promoting universal adherence to the BWC

The Council Decision is structured around six projects, spanning thirty-six months. The first project addresses the issue of universal adherence to the BWC, as a total of 17 states are yet to ratify or accede to the Convention (six among the 17 have signed it). Support for universalisation has featured as a primary element of the EU's support to the BWC since 2006. Universalisation activities are currently focused on Africa, Haiti and five small island states in the Pacific; one of which, Samoa, has acceded to the Convention since the EU extended its support to the country. They take the form of high-level awareness-raising activities about the BWC and the benefits of joining for parliamentarians, government institutions and national political figures in States not yet party to the BWC. They also involve sharing technical expertise with key players from scientific and academic communities.

Important partners in universalisation activities include States Parties willing to host regional workshops, such as Fiji, which hosted a workshop for Pacific islands states in July 2017, as well as other States Parties which share their experience in joining and implementing the Convention. Other partners are non-governmental, such as Parliamentarians for Global Action, which informs and mobilises legislators on issues such

as treaty accession, and VERTIC, which provides legal assistance specifically on CBRN instruments. With respect to universalisation, past EU Joint Actions/Council Decisions have proven instrumental in providing the resources necessary for the promotion of the BWC among key stakeholders in countries where the topic of joining the Convention is not highly politicized. Among other results, they have contributed to more than twenty States joining the Convention.

Enhancing interactions with science and technology stakeholders

Council Decision 2016/51 also supports the enhancement of interactions with non-governmental stakeholders on science and technology (S&T). S&T advances in the life sciences are taking place at an unprecedented pace, generating a growing need to develop appropriate monitoring and balanced policy-making to prevent their use for hostile purposes. The Council Decision eases this endeavour with activities to increase awareness of the BWC among scientific communities, enhance policy-makers' understanding of scientific and technological issues relevant to the BWC, and promote international cooperation for scientific capacity-building in the areas of preparedness and response to the deliberate use of diseases.

To that effect, five regional workshops are planned under the current Council Decision to gather scientists, policymakers, international and regional organisations and NGOs. The first of these workshops took place in September 2017 in Kiev, Ukraine, for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Workshops for other regions will be held over the next eighteen months in other countries, including in Jordan, Mexico and South Africa. Important partners for the EU in these activities include the United States National Academy of Sciences and The World Academy of Sciences, organisations that help bridge relevant networks of scientists.

In contrast with universalisation, strengthening interactions with non-governmental S&T stakeholders is a new feature in the current Council Decision, reflecting a growing strategic awareness of the importance of deepening the dialogue

with academia, industry and civil society on issues of biosafety and biosecurity.

Assisting capacity-building for national implementation of the BWC

The third project of Council Decision 2016/51 focuses on developing national capacities for BWC implementation by means of 'Extended Assistance Programmes' (EAPs). These EAPs will see some 50 experts nominated by EU Member States, as well as other assistance providers, to assist developing countries in enhancing their implementation of the BWC. This will be undertaken in various ways, ranging from drafting national legislation to implement the BWC, through to sharing technical expertise for bio-incident investigations, and developing national capacities in the peaceful uses of biology. The programmes are conducted in the following 10 States Parties: Cameroon, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Iraq, Lebanon, Malawi, Malaysia, Nepal, Sierra Leone and Yemen. The EAPs started in autumn 2017 and will each last for one year.

Tailored assistance programmes were part of past EU decisions and supported some 15 States in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe, but the financial scope under the 2016 Council Decision exceeds these previous initiatives. The EAPs under Council Decision 2016/51 constitute concrete tools of international assistance for biosafety and biosecurity, which build on, complement and coordinate with other multilateral initiatives. They most notably do so with initiatives implemented under the EU CBRN Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence initiative, as well as with bilateral assistance programmes extended by other States Parties to the BWC.

Supporting preparations for the Eighth BWC Review Conference

The fourth project under the Council Decision supported preparations for the Eighth BWC Review Conference, which took place in November 2016. To a certain extent, this project can be seen as reflective of the strategic long-term approach taken by the Council Decision. The project was articulated around three goals, all geared towards moving forward multilateral discussions on the BWC. The first dimension of the project was the holding of regional workshops to foster a common understanding on topics of importance for the Review Conference. These were held in Kazakhstan, Brazil, India and Ethiopia.

While these workshops, along with the formal BWC preparatory meetings in Geneva, helped make the preparations for the Eighth Review Conference ‘much better than for any previous Review Conference’ (Graham S. Pearson & Nicholas A. Sims, Report From Geneva: The BTWC Eighth Review Conference: A Disappointing Outcome, Harvard Sussex Program Occasional Paper No. 47, February 2017), unfortunately very little was actually agreed upon at the Review Conference, as a result of other, unrelated factors. In this respect, the fourth project of Council Decision 2016/51 did not yield direct results. The workshops did, however, concretely illustrate the multiple activities taking place at the national and regional levels with respect to the BWC, and they also highlighted the strong demand from many developing countries for assistance with BWC implementation (Jean-Pascal Zanders, *Beneath the Crust . . . , The Trench*, December 2016). The discussions at the four workshops were therefore of great value to the participating States Parties as well as the BWC Implementation Support Unit, and continue to be of relevance in the implementation, in particular, of the second and third projects of the current Council Decision.

Under the same project, the EU funded an initiative to strengthen Article V of the BWC, on consultation and cooperation, by supporting a study on how to make consultations among States Parties more effective. Another goal of project four was to broaden support for the concept of ‘peer review’

within the BWC. Therefore, a peer review exercise was hosted by Morocco in Rabat and Casablanca in May 2017, gathering more than 50 experts from 10 States Parties and representatives of 10 Moroccan institutions involved in biosafety and biosecurity. It was the first time such an exercise had been held outside Europe (three exercises had been conducted since 2013 in EU Member States). The exercise enabled discussions among States Parties that generated recommendations for enhanced national implementation and provided suggestions for areas of deepened international cooperation.

Despite the disappointing outcome of the Eighth Review Conference, the sustainability of the EU’s biosecurity strategy relies on, and therefore seeks multilateral strengthening of, the BWC regime.

Strengthening the United Nations Secretary-General’s Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological and Toxin Weapons

A fifth aspect of Council Decision 2016/51 is the strengthening of the Secretary-General’s Mechanism (SGM), created in the late 1980s to investigate, on request by any UN Member State, allegations of the use of chemical, biological or toxin weapons. Key to this mechanism is its roster of experts. While certain UN Member States have been offering training courses to these experts since 2009, Council Decision 2016/51 funded the participation of some experts to a basic SGM training course in Australia, and to a specialized course on decision-making and operational planning in the United Kingdom. It also funded the participation of some experts in an advanced training course in Sweden for potential Heads of Mission of an SGM investigation. The need for specialized training was identified as part of the lessons-learned process carried out following the completion of the UN Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria. These lessons-learned were placed at the core of Council Decision 2016/51’s approach to strengthening the SGM in the long term. The implementation of this project is undertaken by the WMD Branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in New York.

Enabling tools for awareness-raising, education and engagement on issues concerning biological weapons

Finally, Council Decision 2016/51 seeks to produce practical tools to facilitate and support the abovementioned projects and to raise awareness of the BWC with relevant stakeholders. In this regard, the Council Decision also supports the development of an electronic platform for the submission of the Convention's Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs). This practical improvement for the submission of CBMs (which is an obligation agreed upon at the Second BWC Review Conference) aims to make the submission of CBMs, and their access, by States Parties easier and more user-friendly, and is the continuation of a project launched under the previous EU Council Decision. Outreach measures include the publication of an introductory guide to the BWC, the translation of the Biological Security Education Handbook (produced by the University of Bradford) into French and Arabic, the translation of *An Efficient and Practical Approach to Biosecurity* (produced by the Danish Centre for Biosecurity and Biopreparedness) into French and Spanish, and the production of an educational video on the BWC.

Assessment and conclusions

Council Decision 2016/51 is underpinned by the principles and approaches reflected in the 2016 Global Strategy. The Council Decision pursues the Global Strategy's goal to 'work for more effective prevention, detection and responses to global pandemics', especially by increasing the EU's investments in national capacity-building for the implementation of the BWC. By formally engaging S&T actors in discussions on biosecurity, the Council Decision contributes to creating an enabling environment for 'global rules [...] necessary in fields such as biotechnology [...] to avoid the related security risks and reap their economic benefits'.

The Council Decision promotes the approach, stated in the Strategy, 'to support the expanding membership, universalisation, full implementation and enforcement of multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control treaties and regimes'. Indeed, while enforcement falls out of the scope of

the Decision and the BWC regime, the EU's support to the UN SGM contributes to strengthening the establishment of facts in front of the Security Council, which may take action on the matter.

Moreover, by supporting multilateral discussions to strengthen the BWC, Council Decision 2016/51 aligns with the Global Strategy as it seeks to 'promote exchanges with relevant multilateral fora to help spearhead the development of rules and build partnerships at the frontiers of global affairs' (Global Strategy 2016). This approach is also reflected in the EU's support to the outcome of multilateral negotiations, enshrined in the guiding principle stipulated by the Decision of 'making best use of the mandate of the ISU as agreed at the Sixth Review Conference and renewed and expanded at the Seventh Review Conference'.

While Council Decision 2016/51 mirrors the EU's 2016 Global Strategy, it does not break much with the past. In fact, the Council Decision is the continuation of past endeavours to strengthen the implementation of the BWC. It consequently and purposefully builds on previous experience – universalisation activities, extended programmes of assistance and support for multilateral processes – to bring about a more effective BWC regime. However, the current Decision does not just repeat previous efforts. It is a consolidated initiative, strengthening partnerships with non-governmental S&T stakeholders, increasing investments made in national capacity-building and promoting the innovative concept of 'peer review' to enhance transparency and build confidence among BWC States Parties, while strengthening national implementation and furthering international cooperation.

The success of the Decision and past EU support consists of relatively limited, though concrete steps to strengthen the BWC's implementation and universalisation. Still, the Decision aims at sustainability and inclusiveness. While the multilateral agenda of the BWC did not advance significantly at the Eighth Review Conference, the activities conducted under the Council Decision have the potential to build support for a more ambitious and better-resourced

regime at future opportunities.

In light of the EU's increased support to the BWC, the absence of a renewed WMD-specific strategy in 2017 does not seem to signal that its attention for global biosecurity is waning. Putting this strategic continuity into practice will continue to be key to ensuring the effectiveness of past and future support for the BWC: it is indeed already essential for the EU to garner political support for another Council Decision to ensure a successful transition in 2019.

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Verification Watch

Chemical Weapons Convention: The Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties

By Jinkyung Baek and Angela Woodward

Marking the twentieth year since the Chemical Weapons Convention's (CWC) entry into force, the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC took place at the World Forum Convention Centre in The Hague from 27 November to 1 December 2017. The session was comprised of twenty-seven agenda items in total, covering various topics on the organisation's upcoming work. Over 122 representatives from 136 states parties participated in the session, which forms one of the principal organs of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

During the conference, Mr Fernando Arias González of Spain was designated as the new Director-General of the OPCW (C-22/DEC.18, 30 November 2017). Currently Spain's Permanent Representative to the OPCW, his term as Director-General will begin on 25 July 2018, when the current office-holder, H.E. Mr Ahmet Üzümcü, ends his term. This appointment was the conclusion of the election process. Previously, seven candidates for this position were asked to answer questions on the priorities and future challenges of the OPCW, and of the Secretariat management. For background on the Director-General election, see 'OPCW elections', Andreas Persbo, *Trust & Verify* No. 157, Summer 2017, pp. 10-11.

Notably, the conference acknowledged the complete destruction of Russia's chemical weapons on 27 September 2017, which had been officially commemorated on 11 October 2017 on the margins of the 86th session of the Executive Council of the OPCW. The OPCW supported Russia to destroy its 39,967 metric tons of chemical weapons at seven chemical weapon destruction facilities. The Russian Federation's Deputy Minister of

Industry and Trade, G. V. Kalamonov noted that roughly 10 per cent of the country's CW destruction expenditure was funded by Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States (C-22/NAT.28, 28 November 2017). With this accomplishment, the OPCW verification programme has achieved the destruction of 96.3 per cent of the declared chemical weapons stockpile of possessor states.

Furthermore, reports on the activities of the OPCW's subsidiary bodies were noted during the conference: the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB); the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO); the Advisory Body on Administrative and Financial Matters (ABAF); and the Confidentiality Commission. The ABEO is the only such body established through a CSP decision (at the Twentieth Session, in 2015), rather than directly under the Convention itself. Its purpose includes the promotion of 'inter alia, outreach, capacity building, education and public diplomacy' and the furtherance of states parties' declared intent to 'improve interaction with chemical industry, the scientific community, academia, and civil society organisations engaged in issues relevant to the Convention...' (C-20/DEC. 9, 3 December 2015). The report of the Fourth Session of the ABEO, which took place during 29-31 August 2017, notes the board's discussion of the draft strategic plan for education and outreach and the status of implementation of previous ABEO recommendations and a decision to hold the Fifth Session from 27 February to 1 March 2018.

In addition, the ABEO members reported on their active involvements in relevant events. These include meetings such as the regional meetings of the State Parties, the meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities (OEWG-FP), and the OPCW's Symposium on Women in Chemistry, as well as activities including the development of a massive open online course (MOOC) on chemical weapons, a meeting with staff of the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), and participation in Pugwash conferences.

Despite the valuable work of the ABEO, it appears that states parties' collective commitment to improve interaction with civil society organisations that are engaged in issues relevant to the Convention, as declared at the Third Review Conference, is under threat. The accreditation of certain NGOs which are actively engaged in CW non-proliferation and disarmament research, including Human Rights Watch, was denied based on 'the anonymous objections of a small number of States Parties, none of whom provided reasons for their position', despite the view that the OPCW, including its states parties, 'should be a leading example in the promotion of transparency in international organisations, not an agent of regression', according to a group of 31 states parties (C-22/NAT.8, 27 November 2017).

Based on the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties, the organisation's verification system has proven its effectiveness, its vision of a chemical weapons-free world is getting closer to being fulfilled and efforts to educate the next generation on the crucial importance of chemical disarmament and non-proliferation are well underway. However, certain problems remain and innovative solutions that surpass conventional methods are urgently needed for improvements to bear fruit. In particular, while the OPCW's capability to verify the destruction of declared chemical weapons programmes is now well evidenced, the thorny issue of how to verify and destroy all of those remaining programmes which, while formally undeclared, are credibly believed to exist, needs to be tackled in order to achieve the OPCW's objective of a chemical weapon-free world.



Notable Quotes

One more pressing task is the need to bring the legislation of all States Parties into line with the provisions of the Convention. It is important to put into place consistent control over national chemical industries. Furthermore, it is also important to maintain a balance between effective verification and minimising the verification burden on a company, so as not to create an obstacle to the development of international cooperation in the chemical industry. Without improving national legislative bases, government agencies cannot take the appropriate actions to strengthen the non-proliferation regime.

Statement by G. V. Kalamanov, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade, Head of the Delegation of the Russian Federation at the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties, C-22/NAT.28, 28 November 2017.

In order to enhance the global fight against chemical weapons and foster a culture of responsibility, we need to engage a wide range of stakeholders. As the OPCW's work shifts from stockpile destruction to preventing re-emergence of chemical weapons, its activities will require as wide a network of partners as possible, and an extended community of advocates for the Chemical Weapons Convention. This silencing of voices is counter-productive and goes against the OPCW's values of openness and transparency; values which are fundamental to addressing current and future challenges and to achieve our common goal of a world free of chemical weapons. NGOs play an important role in addressing these challenges and giving their representatives a voice will enhance their sense of ownership.

Joint Paper Concerning Accreditation of Non-Governmental Organisations for the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties, C-22/NAT.8, 27 November 2017.



Centre News

National Implementation

Scott Spence, Programme Director

The NIM Programme has been particularly productive since we reported on our activities in the last issue of Trust & Verify. On 10 October, Programme Director Scott Spence participated in an initial project partner consortium meeting in our London office for our newest project: European Union CBRN Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence (EU CBRN CoE) Project 61. The Project 61 consortium consists of international experts from VERTIC, Public Health England, Sustainable Criminal Justice Solutions (UK), the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (the Netherlands) and the International Security and Emergency Management Institute (Slovakia). Scott is the Key Expert for Work Package 1 (legal and regulatory) of this new project on sound chemicals and chemical waste management in the Southeast Asia region, which runs until August 2020.

During 17-18 October, Senior Legal Officer Sonia Drobysz participated in a Training Workshop for African Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) National Points of Contact (NPCs) at the African Union (AU)'s headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Organised by the AU Commission and the BWC Implementation Support Unit, the event brought together 22 States and assistance providers with a view to improve national implementation of the BWC. The capacity-building activity addressed existing challenges in the implementation of the BWC on the African continent and imparted practical information, skills and guidance pertaining to the roles and responsibilities of BWC NPCs. Sonia gave a joint presentation with the representative of Sierra Leone on "Putting into place national legislation for the BWC", discussing a recent BWC national legislation workshop held in Freetown during 13-15 September (see Trust & Verify No. 158, p. 16).

From 23 to 26 October, Sonia and Legal Officer Cédric Apercé participated in a legislative drafting workshop for the

implementation of the BWC in Accra, Ghana. The workshop had the objectives of drafting a bill for national implementation of the BWC, and to launch a consultative interministerial process for the bill's development and ultimate adoption. The workshop was made possible through funding from the Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation of the US Department of State, and followed the BWC Implementation Review Exercise concluded in 2016 in which Ghana participated.

The same week, Scott assisted officials from a number of Jamaican ministries and agencies to address policy and technical matters on a draft bill to implement the BWC, Chemical Weapons Convention and strategic trade controls thereto. Scott's participation in this workshop in Jamaica was part of a project being carried out by VERTIC's NIM Programme in co-operation with the Stimson Center, and funded by the Global Partnership Program of Global Affairs Canada, "Legislative Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 in Latin America and the Caribbean – Phase II (2017-2018)".

From 31 October to 2 November, Cédric participated in the 2nd OIE Global Conference on Biological Threat Reduction in Ottawa, Canada. Organised by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the conference gathered over 300 participants with the goal of encouraging and strengthening links between the health and security sectors and improving international cooperation on biological threat reduction issues. Cédric presented on Global Conversations on the use of technologies - Education and creating a culture of accountability.

During 2-3 November, Scott participated in the Second EU CBRN CoE Project 53 Regional Meeting: Strengthening the National Legal Framework and Provision of Specialized Training on Bio-Safety and Bio-Security in Central Asian Countries, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Scott, Project 53's Key Expert-Legal, updated the participants on the status of Work Package 1: assessment and revision of national legislation and best practices in the area of biosafety and biosecurity, and harmo-

nization with the appropriate international regulations such as International Health Regulations, BWC and Codex Alimentarius including the area of regional emergency response with the aim of coming to a "One Health" system. He also gave a presentation on Emergency Response Planning in Central Asia: Common Challenges and Opportunities for Co-operation. The meeting was also the opportunity for VERTIC to share and discuss with the National Team of Experts its interim reports on possible regional emergency intervention schemes for biological events, which focus on the key operating principles and practices of the Common Alert Protocol (CAP) and Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC).

Sonia and Cédric participated in a legislative drafting workshop for the implementation of the BWC in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire from 7 to 8 November. The workshop formed part of the assistance provided under Project 3 of the EU Council Decision 2016/51 in support of the BWC, implemented by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and BWC Implementation Support Unit and supported by VERTIC's expert legal advice. Our work under this project is funded by the Counter Proliferation Programme of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

During 20-21 November, Sonia conducted consultations on UN Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1540 implementing legislation in Antigua and Barbuda. During these two days, Sonia worked with the participants to develop the contours of an omnibus UNSCR 1540 bill to prohibit and prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and control activities with nuclear material, biological agents and toxins and toxic chemicals as well as dual-use equipment and technology. The NIM Programme's work with Antigua and Barbuda is funded by the Global Partnership Program of Global Affairs Canada.

Scott participated in Fact-Finding Visits in Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia during 20-24 November as part of EU CBRN CoE Project 61 (see first paragraph). These were the first two of ten visits to the project countries – Brunei Darus-

salam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam – through March 2018.

Cédric attended the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) from 28 to 29 November 2017. States Parties to the CWC gathered in The Hague, the Netherlands, for the annual review of the operation of the Convention. This year also marked the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the CWC, the complete elimination of Russia's chemical weapons stockpile and the non-renewal of the mandate of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigation Mechanism. Our participation in this year's Conference was possible due to funding from Green Cross International and Global Affairs Canada.

Scott, Sonia and Cédric represented VERTIC at the Meeting of States Parties to the BWC, and related side events, during 30 November through 7 December in Geneva. VERTIC warmly welcomed expressions of appreciation and support for our work from the Chair of the Meeting of States Parties, Canada, Ghana, as well as the International Science and Technology Center (ISTC) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). Scott gave VERTIC's statement during the informal plenary session for NGOs. VERTIC also participated in various related side events. In particular, Scott provided an overview of the NIM Programme's work as part of the EU's continued support for strengthening the BWC. Scott and Sonia also promoted and discussed BWC survey findings with project country delegations at the US-Malaysia BWC side event "Reports on BWC-relevant developments by international experts", during 30 November to 1 December. VERTIC is grateful to the Government of Canada (Global Affairs Canada / Global Partnership Program) whose financial support made our participation in the BWC Meeting of States Parties possible.

During 11 to 13 December, Scott participated in an EU Non-proliferation Network Meeting followed by the 2017 EU Non-proliferation and Disarmament Conference, in Brussels, Belgium. The Network Meeting had the objective of discuss-

ing the current state of the network, expanding it, and expanding co-operation with non-EU research organisations, while the Conference was an opportunity to discuss and identify further measures to combat the proliferation of WMD, their delivery systems and inter-related disarmament objectives, as well as issues related to conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons.

Finally, Sonia and Cédric participated in a Workshop on national legislation for the implementation of CBRN international instruments, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade in Bridgetown, Barbados during 13-15 December 2017. The workshop consisted of awareness-raising presentations on CBRN international instruments and related issues; a review of the key findings of VERTIC's analyses of Barbados' legislation for the implementation of the BWC, CWC, international legal instruments for nuclear security and the related provisions of UNSCR 1540; and the presentation of available legislative drafting tools.

Verification and Monitoring

Larry MacFaul, Programme Director

In October, Larry MacFaul, Programme Director and Andreas Persbo, Executive Director, travelled to Germany for consultations on current and future capabilities of remote sensing equipment. This work was carried out under an ongoing project investigating the Open Skies Treaty, sponsored by the US Department of State. While in Germany, the team met up with project partner, Hartwig Spitzer, Hamburg University and held discussions with staff at 'BavAria' a network organisation for the aerospace industry and the German Aerospace Center (DLR) which is the national aeronautics and space research centre for the German government.

The final quarter of 2017 also saw the VM programme publish the results of its major study exploring the potential of establishing a multilateral Group of Scientific Experts on Nuclear Disarmament Verification (GSE-NDV). This group would act as a means to solidify work and sustain progress on the verification and monitoring of future nuclear disarmament

commitments. Published as Verification Matters Number 13 under the title, 'Means to Reinforce Research on Nuclear Disarmament Verification: Report on a Series of Regional Conversations', the report is based on a series of four consultative workshops, which were held in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. The report argues that such a group could build on the embryonic network of international expertise that currently exists through a sustainable and inclusive programme of work and lead to an initial set of verification arrangements that may prove politically acceptable. A draft of the report was launched in New York at an event co-hosted with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) on 30 October 2017. The programme was represented by Andreas Persbo and Larry MacFaul. The meeting also heard from Mr Ioan Tudor of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and Mr Erik Berger Husem from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which had kindly sponsored this project.

On 7-8 December, the VM programme hosted a workshop on International Safeguards, Non-Proliferation and Control of Nuclear Material in collaboration with Namibian Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation. The workshop, which was held at the Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management, in Windhoek, was sponsored by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the UK government. VERTIC was represented by Senior Researchers Noel Stott and Alberto Muti. The workshop covered the topics of non-proliferation, control of nuclear materials and nuclear disarmament, with a particular focus on IAEA Safeguards and their implementation at the national level.

In November, the programme was privileged to host delegations from two Asian countries to discuss, among other issues, the situation on the Korean Peninsula and the implications of Brexit on the UK's safeguards system, its nuclear industry and its civilian nuclear cooperation agreements.

Also in November, staff completed a project on International Reporting and Information-sharing in Nuclear Security and, in particular, the utility of the Consolidated Na-

tional Nuclear Security Report (CNNSR), which was presented at the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit. The CNNSR aims to make reporting on nuclear security more efficient, accessible and sustainable by consolidating reporting requirements arising from various instruments in one single form. This project was kindly sponsored by the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The VM programme also participated in a number of conferences. Noel Stott attended the 2017 Moscow Nonproliferation Conference held from 19 – 21 October 2017, organised by the Center for Energy and Security Studies in partnership with the Russian Foreign Ministry. Larry MacFaul attended the Meeting of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention from 4-8 December in Geneva, Switzerland. The following week, Larry attended the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference, held in Brussels from 12–13 December. The NIM Programme was also represented at both these conferences. Meanwhile, Andreas Persbo attended Wilton Park's annual event on Nuclear Non-proliferation: Challenges and Opportunities for the Global Regime from 11–15 December. He led a small group discussion on scientific and technical co-operation on verification.

Grants and administration

Helen Cummins, Administrator

A new intern joined VERTIC in November 2017. Jinkyung Baek ('Bea'), holds a Master's Degree in International Relations from the University of Warwick, United Kingdom. She is working in the Verification and Monitoring Programme assisting staff on nuclear safeguards and security projects.

VERTIC bid farewell to intern Tilly Hampton in December 2017. Tilly had been working with Angela Woodward, Deputy Executive Director, on research and writing for Trust & Verify, from Christchurch, New Zealand. Tilly will shortly take up an internship at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research in Geneva, before she takes up a position as a Policy Analyst at the New Zealand Ministry of Defence. We wish her well in her new career.

After several delays, we have been given a new date for moving into our new office space in Bethnal Green, also operated by the Ethical Property Company. The move is now scheduled to take place in July 2018.

And finally: Erratum

The articles 'India-Pakistan: A Proposal to Beef Up Information Exchanges' and 'Public-Private Partnerships in Human Rights Monitoring', in the Verification Watch section of Trust & Verify No. 158, were written by Tilly Hampton, a VERTIC intern in the Office of the Executive Director, and not Angela Woodward, as stated in the publication.

building trust through verification

VERTIC is an independent, not-for-profit, nongovernmental organisation. Our mission is to support the development, implementation and effectiveness of international agreements and related regional and national initiatives, with particular attention to issues of monitoring, review, legislation and verification. We conduct research, analysis and provide expert advice and information to governments and other stakeholders. We also provide support for capacity building, training, legislative assistance and cooperation.

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