

Monday 6th December 2010

The 2010 Meeting of States Parties: responding to deliberate disease

The 2010 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) is the concluding part of the second inter-sessional process for the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC). This process was established by the Sixth Review Conference of the BWC which was held at the end of 2006. This means that the MSP is the last BWC meeting to discuss substantive issues prior to the convening of the Seventh BWC Review Conference in 2011. The BWPP daily reports from the 2006 Review Conference and the subsequent meetings in 2007 through 2010 are available via the BWPP website at <http://www.bwpp.org>.

The topic for discussion this year is 'Provision of assistance and coordination with relevant organizations upon request by any State Party in the case of alleged use of biological or toxin weapons, including improving national capabilities for disease surveillance, detection and diagnosis and public health systems'. The topic for this year was selected by the Sixth Review Conference for the BWC which was held at the end of 2006. This year's meetings are chaired by Ambassador Pedro Oyarce of Chile.

The draft agenda, the draft programme of work, the annual report of the BWC's Implementation Support Unit (ISU) and the Universalization report have been published and can be found via the ISU website <http://www.unog.ch/bwc>; official documents of the meeting can also be found via the UN documents server <http://documents.un.org>.

The Meeting of Experts

The MSP was preceded by a one-week Meeting of Experts (MX) held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland from 23 to 27 August. The MX produced a number of ideas and suggestions which were annexed to its formal report. These ideas and suggestions were condensed into a 'Synthesis Paper' prepared by the Chair and circulated to States Parties (BWC/MSP/2010/L.1, dated 18 October 2010).

Deliberate disease issues

The use of biological weapons may be summarized by the simple phrase 'deliberate disease'. Distinguishing between a natural occurrence of disease and an outbreak that has been deliberately induced may not always be a simple matter. In both cases, there may be considerable public health problems and a significant humanitarian catastrophe.

Responses to the alleged use of biological weapons should be capable of trying to find answers to a number of questions that go beyond the identification of a disease and its method of transmission in a natural outbreak. For example, even if a disease might sometimes naturally occur in an area, there may be questions about whether the spread of the disease in a particular situation had been artificially enhanced. A further set of questions

would relate to whether there was any evidence of a delivery system, including a vector [such as an insect], used to spread the disease.

These questions may not be as simple as they seem at first sight as many answers to them would have to be distinguished from other possibilities that may appear to be very similar – such as a different, perhaps naturally occurring, illness that results in similar symptoms. However, answers to all of these questions would be needed to be able to deal in the most effective manner with a public health emergency that had been caused by the deliberate spread of disease as well as potentially contributing to identifying who might have caused the spread.

The Seventh BWC Review Conference

As the 2010 meetings are the last of the current inter-sessional process, this naturally leads to thoughts about what should happen in the BWC Review Conference that is to be held in 2011.

The five-yearly Review Conferences provide an opportunity for the BWC States Parties to consider all aspects of the Convention and its implementation. The Fifth Review Conference, opened in 2001, was unable to agree a final position owing to considerable disagreements between the States Parties relating to the negotiations that had been taking place on a protocol intended to strengthen the BWC. Earlier that year the US had announced it would be unable to accept any product from those negotiations, effectively bringing the talks to a halt. The Fifth Review Conference was suspended and reconvened in 2002 when it agreed to a series of meetings between Review Conferences that has now become known as the inter-sessional process. The Sixth Review Conference, held in 2006, was able to carry out a substantial review of the Convention and to agree a final document. However, this consensus was achieved by leaving some subjects areas off the agenda; most notably, the issue of verification.

With the Seventh Review Conference on the horizon, many governments and commentators are already doing some forward thinking on relevant subjects. A number of conferences, seminars and other gatherings have been held to consider issues relating to the Review Conference; these include a Wilton Park conference in the UK in September, two conferences (back-to-back) in Beijing in November, and a Pugwash Study Group meeting the weekend before the MSP. The political significance of the BWC and the review have been recognised within governments; for example, on the Friday before the MSP, the White House announced that Ambassador Laura Kennedy, the US Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament, had been appointed ‘US Special Representative for Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) Issues’.

No formal decisions have yet been taken on the Review Conference. Ambassador Paul van den IJssel (Netherlands) has been nominated as President for the Conference and it has been proposed that the Conference be held during 5-22 December [Friday 23 December is a UN holiday so there would be no support facilities in the building; the Chemical Weapons Convention Conference of the States Parties is to be held in the Hague during 28 November-2 December]. It is expected that a formal decision on the President, the dates and the budget for the Conference will be taken by the MSP this week. Further decisions needed in relation to the Conference can be taken at a Preparatory Committee that is likely to meet in April.

This is the first report from the Meeting of States Parties for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention which is being held from 6 to 10 December 2010 in Geneva. The reports are designed to help people who are not in Geneva to follow the proceedings. Copies are available via <<http://www.bwpp.org/reports.html>>.

The reports are prepared by Richard Guthrie on behalf of the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP). Financial assistance for this project has been provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Sweden.

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Tuesday 7th December 2010

The Opening Day: statements and positions

The 2010 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) for the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) opened on Monday morning with Ambassador Pedro Oyarce of Chile in the Chair. Before the routine administrative decisions such as the adoption of the agenda, the programme of work, the rules of procedure and participation in the meeting, the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Sergei Ordzhonikidze, communicated a message from the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon. Talking of the pace of advances in the life sciences, he said: 'there is a pressing need for a structured and regular means of monitoring developments and assessing their implications'. He also called upon those states that had not done so to sign and ratify the Convention 'without delay'.

The rest of the proceedings in the main meeting room consisted of statements. Where copies of these have been provided by those who delivered them, the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) will place these on its website <<http://www.unog.ch/bwc>>.

Plenary statements

After the completion of formalities, the Meeting heard plenary statements from States Parties in the following order: Cuba (on behalf of the non-aligned states [NAM]), Belgium (on behalf of the EU), Canada (on behalf of the 'JACKSNNZ' – [an informal grouping of Japan, Australia, Canada, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Norway and New Zealand]), Japan, China, Russia, Mexico, the United States, Australia, Germany, Argentina, Algeria, Chile, Serbia, Armenia, South Africa, India and Switzerland, at which point the meeting broke for lunch. After lunch, statements were heard from Bangladesh, Morocco, Indonesia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Iran, Brazil, Kenya, Ghana and Canada (right of reply). The World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) then made a statement.

The statements, overall, seemed more developed than in recent comparable meetings. This may be as many participants are looking towards the Seventh Review Conference which is to be held in 2011. Corridor discussions with delegates indicated that the imminence of the Review Conference has prompted some officials to allocate more time to focus on BWC-related issues.

A number of themes were identifiable in the statements, in addition to general comments on desirability of universal membership of the Convention, national implementation, verification issues and biosecurity issues. There was much on international cooperation under Article X, with reference to 'balanced implementation'. Delegates were reminded in some statements of paragraph 54 of the final document of the Sixth Review Conference which 'encourages States Parties to provide appropriate information on how [Article X] is being implemented'. The UN Secretary-General's investigation mechanism was mentioned many times and questions were raised about how this should be integrated with other international arrangements. Many statements made positive comments on the work of the ISU with most of these making explicit or implicit indications that it should continue past

2011. Some suggested the resources available to it should be enhanced. While most statements referred in some way, directly or indirectly, to capacity building in relation to response to biological attacks, some noted that this extra capacity was most valuable to have in place before an attack. On Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs), a number of states referred to their reexamination to see if improvements to the system of returns could be made, although a few others expressed some hesitation or reservation about aspects of this. It was noted that there has been a record number of CBM returns so far in 2010, but that this still means that less than half of all States Parties have submitted returns this year. The importance of assistance for some delegates to be able to attend the MSP was raised.

There were some notable points from individual statements. The Cuba/NAM statement had a particular focus on the proposal for a mechanism for implementation of Article X that had been made in 2009 (and contained in doc. BWC/MSP/2009/MX/WP.24). The EU noted its Joint Actions and CBRN Action Plan. China reiterated its preference that any investigation of alleged use of biological weapons be held under the auspices of the UN Security Council through Article VI of the BWC rather than via the UN Secretary-General's mechanism. Serbia stated that its Parliament had voted to withdraw that country's reservation to the 1925 Geneva Protocol. Iran suggested that the primary responsibility for response to a biological attack should rest with States Parties and that international organizations could only play a complementary role. Iran also raised the subject of sanctions applied by Canada against entities in Iran, suggesting that these had been applied in an unjustified manner. Canada, exercising its right of reply, expressed its view that these sanctions had been applied in an appropriate manner under the authority of UN Security Council resolution 1929. The OIE noted it was looking into the possibility of formalising arrangements under which it might provide technical expertise for investigations of alleged use of biological weapons.

Statements by NGOs

As in previous Meetings, time was set aside during the afternoon to provide an opportunity for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to address the Meeting in an informal session. Statements were given in the following order: University of Bradford; London School of Economics; International Network of Engineers and Scientists for Global Responsibility (INES); National Defence Medical College of Japan & Bradford Disarmament Research Centre; Pax Christi International; Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC); Biosecurity Working Group of the Inter-Academy Panel on International Issues; Research Group for Biological Arms Control, Hamburg; Wilton Park; BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP); the Center for Biodefense, Law and Public Policy, Texas Tech University; and the European Biosafety Association.

Side Event

There was one side event on Monday which was convened by the Geneva Forum, Germany, Norway and Switzerland during the lunch break on the topic of 'Opportunities to Enhance to BWC Confidence-Building Measures'. Introductory remarks were given by Ambassador Jürg Lauber (Switzerland) and Jon Erik Strømø (Norway) followed by a presentation on the project on CBMs sponsored by the three countries by Volker Beck (Germany). Silvia Cattaneo of the Geneva Forum chaired the event.

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Wednesday 8th December 2010

The Second Day: Review Conference preparations

Tuesday morning of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) Meeting of States Parties (MSP) saw the first working session of the meeting which was on 'Arrangements for the Seventh Review Conference and its Preparatory Committee in 2011'. For the purposes of planning the programme of work of the MSP, the central topic of the meeting had been divided into three sub-topics. The first of these, 'aims and challenges', was timetabled for discussion in a working session on Tuesday afternoon (although a little of this took place in the morning). As there is overlap between the three sub-topics, the discussions on all three will be covered in the next daily report as this also allows for more space in this report to cover the Review Conference preparations.

Review Conference preparations

The United Kingdom, on behalf of the depositary states, formally proposed that the Review Conference be held during 5-22 December with the Preparatory Committee preceding it during 13-15 April. [*Note: Friday 23 December is a UN holiday and the week before the Review Conference there is a Chemical Weapons Convention meeting in the Hague which will involve many BWC participants.*] These dates were adopted by consensus.

The position of President rotates between the regional groups for each conference and in 2011 it is the turn of the Western Group. Australia, as group coordinator, formally nominated Ambassador Paul van den IJssel (Netherlands) as the candidate for President. This was approved by consensus by the MSP. Ambassador Van den IJssel then addressed the meeting, indicating that his themes for the Conference would be 'consensus, but also ambition'. He encouraged the bringing forward of ideas and proposals, but in a timely manner, noting that 'proposals have less chance of attracting consensus if their first international exposure is at the Review Conference itself'. The Ambassador also noted that the Netherlands was considering organizing a seminar in September on prospects for the Review Conference.

The budget for BWC costs is prepared following UN financial conventions and is thus calculated in US Dollars (USD) notwithstanding that much of the expenditure will occur in Swiss Francs (CHF). On introducing the proposed budget for 2011, the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) indicated two reasons why this budget was higher than that of 2006: the first was that there had been significant changes in the USD:CHF exchange rate; and the second was the running costs of the ISU which had not existed in 2006. The 2011 budget is roughly \$2 million while that of 2006 was \$1.3 million. The budget prompted some questions from the floor. The United States and Japan both requested clarification of costs, with the former asking for a decision to be deferred until clarification had been provided. At the suggestion of the Chairman of the MSP, Ambassador Oyarce, Ambassador Van den IJssel took on his first task as President-designate to carry out consultations with States Parties on

the budget. Consultations were due to take place after the closure of the formal meetings of the day.

The floor was then opened for a general discussion on Review Conference preparations. Interventions were heard, in the following order, from: China, Canada, ISU, Germany, Pakistan, Chile, Brazil, United Kingdom, Philippines, Canada and Algeria.

The first three interventions were by the co-sponsors of the main Beijing conference in November, the details of which are summarized in a working paper (WP.1) [Note: the other Beijing conference on scientific developments is summarized in paper (INF.1)] The Beijing conferences, and other events such as that at Wilton Park, were commented on within a number of the subsequent interventions. Brazil noted the usefulness of frank discussions in less formal settings to help develop consensus. The UK pointed out that as the number of possible future events increased there would be benefits in coordination between events, perhaps through the ISU, both on timing and on content. The Philippines, noting these events, also noted the positive contributions of NGOs.

Germany's intervention was on the Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) project that had been the subject of Monday's side event. Chile noted that without verification arrangements under the Convention, CBMs were a valuable contribution to transparency. Canada's second intervention was to introduce two working papers, the first of which was on CBMs (WP.2). This contained proposals for possible discussion at the Review Conference which included a suggestion that CBM returns should be translated into the UN languages using voluntary contributions; that States Parties should be able to raise questions to clarify details with other States Parties about their returns; and that States Parties should be encouraged to make their returns public, a position Canada has adopted for its own returns from 2011. The other working paper introduced in this intervention was on compliance assessment (WP.3) which proposed a broader concept of overall compliance rather than a focus on compliance at individual facilities.

Pakistan indicated it had established an inter-agency working group on BWC issues which was contributing to that country's policy development in the run-up to the Review Conference. Algeria posed the question of whether there might be benefits in having discussions on how the topics discussed in the inter-sessional process could be translated into commitments at the Review Conference.

Side Events

There were two side events on Tuesday. The first, in the morning before the start of the day's formal proceedings, was convened by the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC) on the subject of 'National Implementation Status and a Recommendation for an Action Plan'. Presentations were given on topics of national implementation, including the launch of the new national legislation database, see <<http://www.vertic.org>>, reservations to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, and a proposal for amendment of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court to include crimes relating to use of biological weapons. The second, at lunchtime, was convened by the Geneva Forum and the ISU on the subject of 'Synthetic Biology: Engineering a More Secure Future'. Presentations were given by Piers Millett (ISU), Andrew Hessel (Singularity University) and Robert Carlson (Biodesic). The event was chaired by Silvia Cattaneo of the Geneva Forum.

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Thursday 9th December 2010

The Third Day: the main topic of the meeting

The 2010 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) continued on Wednesday with further discussion of the main topic of the meeting: 'Provision of assistance and coordination with relevant organizations upon request by any State Party in the case of alleged use of biological or toxin weapons, including improving national capabilities for disease surveillance, detection and diagnosis and public health systems'. This topic had been divided into sub-topics, the first of which, 'aims and challenges', was discussed on Tuesday. The second and third, 'building national capacity' and 'preparing effective responses', were discussed on Wednesday. As there is overlap between the three sub-topics, the discussions on all three is covered in this report. A fourth sub-topic [which was left out in the introduction of yesterday's report owing to an editing error, apologies] relates to 'international partners and mechanisms' was scheduled for Thursday morning but some discussion on this sub-topic took place on Wednesday.

The draft procedural elements of the final report of the meeting were circulated in the room in the afternoon. These simply describe the practical aspects of convening the MSP and are thus uncontroversial. The substantive paragraphs which describe the discussion of the topic of the meeting have yet to be circulated and it is clear that consultations are taking place on what might be within them. Consultations are also continuing on the question of the budget for BWC activities in 2011, including the costs of running the Review Conference.

Structure of the synthesis paper

Much of the discussion on the main topic followed the structure of the synthesis paper circulated by the Chairman in October (document BWC/MSP/2010/L.1). This is divided into sections reflecting the chosen sub-topics. The production of a synthesis paper after the Meeting of Experts has been a routing activity in the BWC inter-sessional process since 2004. As a document in the name of the Chairman, traditionally the synthesis paper is not debated in any detail. Indeed, the 2009 final report of the MSP described the synthesis paper in the following terms: 'synthesis of these considerations, lessons, perspectives, recommendations, conclusions and proposals ... attached to this report as Annex I. This annex was not proposed for adoption as an outcome of the Meeting, and therefore was not discussed with that aim. Thus, the annex was not agreed upon and consequently has no status'. Previous MSP reports used similar language.

Corridor discussions with some of the delegations raising questions, comments and suggestions for language in the synthesis paper indicated that many of these delegations were fully aware that the paper had no status as an official negotiated document. However, by discussing the text of this document, these delegations were able to send clear signals to other delegations and to those putting together text for the final report of the meeting on what language they wished to see in that report.

Main discussion

There were a number of reminders that biological and toxin weapons can be used to target humans, animals and plants and so response capacities must reflect this. There were also reminders that there may be considerable delays between an outbreak being first observed and the recognition that it was deliberately induced. Many delegations spoke of efforts to coordinate activities across government: for example Brazil referred to a workshop it had held in November involving six ministries; the USA spoke of the need to develop law enforcement capacities and integrate these with response planning; and Australia raised the importance of developing a lead agency for management of outbreaks and of procedures for sharing information across and between governments. The role of earlier experiences and exercises was highlighted. A number of delegations mentioned the lessons learned from pandemic influenza control efforts. The need to implement lessons learned and take remedial action was recognized. On technical capacities it was noted that there was a difference between diagnosis of disease and detection of disease-causing agents. It was also noted there were differences between routine laboratory work and forensic laboratory analysis and there was a need to develop strong networks of laboratories.

Some particular points were raised within individual interventions. The Republic of Korea described protection activities relating to the G20 summit, including the use of mobile detection labs and syndromic surveillance. Russia introduced two working papers, one on the organization of efforts to prevent or contain outbreaks and the other on timely diagnosis of pathogens. Pakistan noted its CBM return should be completed 'soon' and that it was hosting a workshop on synthetic biology in February. A scientist from the Pasteur Institute of Iran, speaking as a member of that country's delegation, described the work of his institute in developing diagnostic kits for a variety of infectious diseases and indicated that the institute was experiencing difficulty in obtaining reference strains owing to international sanctions. Mexico noted that, in the event of a crisis, departments and agencies might need to have access to contingency funds and procedures to obtain these should be prepared in advance.

Side Events

There were two side events on Wednesday. The first, in the morning before the start of the day's other proceedings, was convened by the organizers of the Beijing conference on science and technology trends held during 31 October-3 November. The event was introduced by Jo Husbands (US National Academy of Sciences). Presentations were given by two individuals who have been involved in the provision of scientific advice to policy makers at national and international levels for many years, Ralf Trapp and Bob Mathews, who spoke in their personal capacities on the issues discussed at the conference. The second event, held at lunchtime, was convened by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) on the subject 'Beyond the Global Eradication of Rinderpest'. Presentations were given by Keith Hamilton (OIE) on 'OIE, rinderpest and beyond', Chris Oura (OIE Reference Laboratory, Institute for Animal Health, Pirbright, UK) on 'The challenges of controlling animal diseases and their potential use as weapons of mass destruction' and Elizabeth Mumford (World Health Organization) on 'A case study: international collaboration to investigate the origin of pandemic H1N1 2009'.

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Friday 10th December 2010

The Fourth Day: Partners, universality, the ISU and draft text

The 2010 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) continued on Thursday with Ambassador Pedro Oyarce of Chile in the Chair. The morning session started with discussion of ‘international partners and mechanisms’, the last of the sub-topics. In addition, Nigeria made a plenary statement which included a description of its inter-ministerial National Authority on the BWC and proposals for a Nigerian Centre for Disease Control. The rest of the day’s proceedings dealt with issues of universalization, the report of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU), and drafting of the final report of the MSP. Official documents and presentations referred to will be available via the ISU website <<http://www.unog.ch/bwc>> in due course.

International partners and mechanisms

Presentations were given by the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs on the Secretary-General’s investigation mechanism; by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on investigations of alleged use of chemical weapons; and by the European Union Crisis Management Unit on the EU’s crisis response capacity. There then followed a discussion on the issues raised.

Reports on universalization activities and the ISU

Introducing his report on universalization (document BWC/MSP/2010/4), Ambassador Oyarce described universality as a ‘fundamental matter’ and it was a ‘matter of concern’ that there had been no new States Parties this year. The report noted that Cameroon and Malawi had completed all internal procedures. The ISU added that since the universalization report had been finalized Angola had indicated they may be able to produce an instrument of accession in the near future. The report of the ISU (document BWC/MSP/2010/2) was introduced by Richard Lennane, Head of the Unit. The report describes activities over the previous 12 months which has been a busy time for the ISU. The number of Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) received had reached 70, a record for any single year, and there was still the possibility that further returns could be submitted by the end of 2010.

At the end of a short discussion on the report, there was a round of applause for the ISU. This is a rare event in diplomatic meetings and is therefore notable.

The draft final report of the meeting

The draft procedural elements of the report were circulated on Wednesday and as these simply describe the practical aspects of convening the Meeting they rarely attract comment. On Thursday afternoon, the Chair circulated draft text for language relating to the substantive matters of the MSP, after which the meeting was adjourned for about 90 minutes. On reconvening the meeting, there was a period of silence as no delegation seemed keen to be the first to raise points on the draft. Breaking this pause, Senegal took the floor to express frustration that there was version of the draft in French. The Chair replied that this was unfortunately due to resource issues.

There then followed nearly an hour of interventions that revealed there were distinctly divergent views on the draft text. Some states, including China, India and Iran, felt the text moved too close to making decisions or endorsing particular policy choices. Other delegations, such as Germany, the UK and the USA noted that the use of language that States Parties 'agreed to the value of ...', which was used many times in the draft, was very different to having 'agreed' to some particular policy. India, for example, indicated that the draft text included 'agreed on the value of informing the ISU in the case of the alleged use of biological or toxin weapons' yet this had not been discussed in the MSP.

In summary, the general tone of the debate was that the non-aligned and China perceived the draft paragraphs to be different in character from what had been agreed in previous years and that a shorter, more procedural, report was needed; while the western countries perceived the draft text as being consistent with that agreed in earlier years and wished to maintain the level of substantive detail.

The situation on the Thursday of the MSP in 2010 was in some ways a mirror image of that on the same day the year before. In 2009 a paragraph in the draft text on a possible mechanism for implementation of Article X noted this was something the Seventh Review Conference 'could' consider. In 2009, the USA indicated this form of text would presuppose that such a mechanism would end up on the agenda of the Review Conference and that an MSP could not prejudge this, while the UK expressed a view that the report of the meeting was to highlight common understandings and that the proposal for such a mechanism did not fulfil this criterion. The essentially similar points are being raised by China, India and Iran, amongst others, on the draft text in 2010, in particular regarding the UNSG investigation mechanism. This mirroring was noted in corridor discussions with delegates from non-aligned countries but was seemingly unnoticed by those from western states.

A new draft text is due to be made available to delegations at 9am Friday.

Side Events

There were two side events on Thursday. The first, before the day's main proceedings, was convened by the OPCW on the subject of its ASSISTEX III exercise in Tunisia in October dealing with assistance and protection in the event of use of chemical weapons. A presentation was given by Muhammad Kazi (OPCW) and a short film on the exercise was shown. The second event, at lunchtime, was convened by the University of Bradford (UoB) and the Inter-Academy Panel (IAP). Part 1 of the event, 'Preparing for the Seventh Review Conference', contained presentations on three new reports in the UoB 'Review Conference Paper' series: 'Achieving consensus at the Seventh Review Conference', introduced by Nicholas Sims (LSE); 'Improving the CBM regime', introduced by Filippa Lentzos (LSE); and 'Effective Implementation; The Key Role of Awareness Raising and Education' introduced by Graham Pearson (UoB) on behalf of Malcolm Dando (UoB). Part 2 of the event, 'Dual-Use Education' contained presentations relating to three recent meetings: 'Promoting Dual Use Education in the Life Sciences' by Jo Husbands (IAP); 'Global Networking to Promote Biosecurity and Limit Dual Use Risks: The Science-Ethics-Law-Security Nexus', by Giulio Mancini (Landau Network-Centro Volta) and 'Dual-Use Education for Life Scientists: Mapping the Current Global Landscape and Developments' by Masamichi Minehata (UoB). The event was chaired by Judi Sture (UoB).

NOTE: There will be an additional MSP report covering the final day of the Meeting.

This will be published early next week and will be posted at the web location given below.

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Friday 17th December 2010

The Final Day: conclusion of the meeting

The 2010 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) completed its programme of work on Friday 10 December including agreement on a final report of the MSP.

Reaching agreement on the final report of the meeting

Following the comments in the proceedings on Thursday on the draft substantive paragraphs for the report of the MSP, a new draft of these paragraphs was made available to delegations at 9.00 in the morning. This gave delegates about 90 minutes to go through the amended text before the start of proceedings.

After a short session, during which most states taking the floor indicated broad acceptance of the text but with some suggestions for amendments, the Chair, Ambassador Pedro Oyarce of Chile, adjourned the session again to allow the text to be updated to take into account the comments made. None of the suggested changes caused too much difficulty for other States Parties and a further iteration was brought forward in the late the morning.

On the budget for 2011, which includes the costs of the Seventh Review Conference and the costs of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) for the year, the President-designate of the Seventh Review Conference, Ambassador Paul van den IJssel of the Netherlands, informed the meeting of the results of his consultations on the matter. He noted that there had been limited possibilities to save money and a suggestion that had been made not to produce Summary Records of the formal sessions did not achieve consensus. Japan took the floor to thank the ISU for its 'detailed explanation' of the costings provided during the consultations. The budget was then adopted by the meeting.

There then followed some closing remarks from the Chair. A number of delegates took the floor, mostly to thank the Chair, other delegations, the ISU, the conference support staff and the interpreters. The meeting was closed at 1pm.

Side Event

There was one side event on Friday, held at lunchtime, convened by the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP) which included the launch of its new BioWeapons Monitor. The panel was introduced by Marie Chevrier. Presentations were given by Angela Woodward on the current BWPP activities, by Iris Hunger on the BWPP project on the Review Conference, and Richard Guthrie on the daily reports. The four authors of the BioWeapons Monitor sections on Brazil (Jack Woodall), Germany (Iris Hunger), India (Animesh Roul) and Kenya (Eucharika Kenya) then presented the results of their research.

Reflections

A conscious effort is taken in writing these daily summaries to report the facts and not give opinion. However, there are many times that the question is raised – 'so what do you think

about what happened?’ While the role of a commentator should be to try to report what is happening in an impartial manner, there are times that this style of reporting does not convey some of the atmosphere of meetings. The following are some personal reflections that do not necessarily represent anyone’s views other than the author’s own.

For a meeting that had been conducted in a very positive atmosphere, the speed at which disagreements emerged was surprising. While it did not take long for consensus to return, it might not be so easy to deal with such rapid change during the Review Conference.

Some of the consequences of positions taken were also surprising. Countries that have been amongst the most vocal in advocating the importance of Article X of the Convention on general cooperation and assistance issues and Article VII on international assistance in the event of the use of biological or toxin weapons were those who were pressing hardest for the final report of the MSP not to use such terms as ‘the States Parties agreed on the value of ...’. This makes the 2010 report stand out from those of the other MSPs since 2006 as the language used is much more muted.

The choice of language may be influenced also by the disparate views on what the future should hold for the Convention. Some states that wish to see a new verification arrangement for the BWC argue that more pressure is brought to bear for this if the Convention is seen as the central focal point of any response to possible use of biological or toxin weapons. From this perspective, the UN Secretary-General’s investigation mechanism is thus a distraction from the possibilities of having effective mechanisms embedded within the BWC itself. Yet, if the Convention should be at the centre of any response to an alleged use of biological or toxin weapons before there was the possibility of new arrangements being negotiated would there be any costs to this?

If, as suggested by some delegations, an emergency meeting of BWC States Parties were needed to trigger an investigation, this could cause delays that may have a cost in human suffering and perhaps further deaths. A key element of international efforts to control biological weapons has to be efforts to reduce the impact of any such use as a reduced impact would make such use less attractive to potential perpetrators. Moreover, different diseases require different responses and different treatments. It will be vital, in the hours or days immediately following an attack, that any infective agent being used is able to be identified with high levels of confidence. Unfortunately, as recognised in the discussions in the MSP, the capacities that exist to carry out this kind of identification vary considerably between countries. Where the capacities do not exist within a country where an alleged event has taken place, this will require external resources to help with identification. Any international response will require solid information on which to base decisions such as medicines to be supplied. A prompt investigation may be vital to prompt delivery of assistance.

Another point raised in relation to investigations was that the memberships of global international instruments are not the same – some countries are parties to some and not others. In theory, an investigation of alleged use by a BWC State Party could be triggered by a non-party to the Convention. This caused some delegations some concern. However, if universalization is an achievable goal, then in the longer run this should matter less and less.

Exemplifying the developments within the EU following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, for the first time at a BWC meeting the holder of the rotating EU Presidency, Belgium, had a ‘European Union’ nameplate in front of its desk as well as the country name. This was in addition to the EU nameplate in the international organizations seating area.

This is the sixth and final report from the Meeting of States Parties for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention which was held from 6 to 10 December 2010 in Geneva. The reports are designed to help people who are not in Geneva to follow the proceedings. Copies are available via <<http://www.bwpp.org/reports.html>>.

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