

2008 BWC MEETING OF EXPERTS

REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN

Industry Panel Discussion

19th August 2008

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, I would now like to open the first panel discussion of the Meeting of Experts. As those of you who were here last year will recall, these panel discussions offer a chance for us to engage more interactively with some of the experts present at our meeting. I am hoping that our panel discussions this year will be as useful as those we had last year.

I am joined here on the podium by 4 experts from the coal face of biotechnology. They will help us really get to grips with this today's topic. I am hoping that this panel will offer us a different perspective on our work so far and help us to ensure that we keep our feet firmly planted in the real world. I would like to start off by offering our panelist my thanks as well thanks on behalf of all the States Parties to the BWC.

(On the format of the panel)

Before we get to the substance of this session, I would like to go over how I intend to run our discussion panels. After I have finished my opening remarks, I will give the floor to each out panellists in turn and let them have an opportunity to make a few opening remarks, or to provide some background on their, or their organisation's, activities. I will then ask our experts a few questions on the topics allotted to the panel. With a little luck, we will get a discussion going up here on the podium. I am hoping that this will whet your appetite; as I will then be throwing open the floor for your questions and comments. I would encourage everyone to make the most of the opportunity offered by having our panellists here with us this morning. We should take advantage of their experience and expertise by asking them questions. In accordance with what we did last year, it is my intention to record as much as we can from these discussions on the BWC website – so if you miss something this afternoon, you will hopefully be able to find it there soon.

(On the topics for the panel)

Throughout the course of our work so far on biosafety and biosecurity, we have looked at various concepts and approaches. We started this morning by hearing statements and presentations from international organisations. We have also heard from States Parties. We have just finished a session with professional biosafety and biosecurity associations, and representatives from a range of important international scientific organisations. This panel offers us another viewpoint on these issues – the perspectives of industry, the private sector and commercial operations.

As we all know, the biological sciences have become big business. The biotechnology sector is, or could be in the future, an important economic driver for many of our countries. Both technology and know-how is spreading around the globe. As we consider issues of biosafety and biosecurity at our meeting here in Geneva, we must not forget that, out there these businesses are pushing at the boundaries of human knowledge. This panel is an acknowledgement of the important role that the private sector has to play – in both the biological sciences and the BWC. I hope that this panel will be another small milestone in our efforts to build an ever more fruitful relationship between the BWC and commercial operations.

(On the composition of the panel)

We are privileged to have with us today, experts on a variety of aspects of each of the issues that this panel will cover. On our panel this afternoon, we have both old and new friends of the Convention. We have:

Dr. Gary Burns: Dr. Burns is Global Biosafety Manager for Astra Zeneca, one of the world leading pharmaceutical companies. He is a member of the UK Scientific Advisory Committee for Genetic Modification and a Past-President of the European Biosafety Association. In 2007 he served as Vice-Chair of a CEN Workshop which culminated in an agreement for an International Laboratory Biorisk Management Standard published in February this year. Dr Burns career in health and safety has also seen him employed by the UK Health and Safety Executive where he worked as a Specialist Inspector in the Biological Agents Unit.

Dr. John Keddie: Dr. Keddie is Vice-President, R&D Operations (Europe & International) & Worldwide Environment, Health & Safety for GlaxoSmithKline plc, one of the worlds leading Pharmaceuticals companies. A scientist by background, he has a PhD in Microbiology from the University of Nottingham in the UK. John serves on a number of government and other agency advisory groups including the UK Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens

Dr. Robert Friedman: Dr. Friedman is Vice President for Public Policy at the Venter Institute. He directs JCVI's Policy Center and is also active in several projects ongoing in the Institute's Environmental Genomics Group. He was Vice President for Research at The Heinz Center and was a Senior Associate at the Office of Technology Assessment, U.S. Congress.

Dr. Shrikumar Suryanarayan: Dr. Suryanarayan is currently the Director-General of the Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises of India (ABLE). He is a biochemical engineer by training and has more than 23 years of industry experience.
