Summary of Proceedings

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Alex Lampalzer
Deputy Chief
BWC Implementation Support Unit
UNODA (Geneva Branch)

Twitter:  #BWCPacific
Facebook:  @BWCISU
Summary of Proceedings I

Overview of Biological Weapons Convention (A. Lampalzer, ODA)

• Stressed that BWC represents key pillar in multilateral security architecture - BWC has established a strong norm against BWs over the years

• Highlighted the various benefits of joining the BWC incl. rel. low costs involved of being a SP

• Made the plea for further universalization of the Convention

BW: their threat, their control and the need for stakeholder involvement (J.P. Zanders, ODA)

• Informed about the BWC threat spectrum and alternative BW uses

• Noted that use of BWs has so far been extremely rare and that nature poses in fact the greatest challenge (13 Mio persons killed every year by infectious agents)

• Emphasized the importance of a multi-layered & multi-sectoral governance model to address potential BW threats
Summary of Proceedings II

BWC in the regional context (A. Woodward, VERTIC)

• Provided an overview on regional participation in the BWC and CWC
• Stressed the importance of sustained supported regarding universalization efforts
• Noted the relevance of the BWC in the Pacific Region, particularly with respect to biosafety and biosecurity
• Informed about specific challenges such as competing priorities, distance from political process in Geneva, lack of resources, limited capacities and costs

The BWC and the Pacific Region – a perspective from the Pacific Islands Forum (L. Kershaw, PIFS)

• Shared the purpose of the PIF to deepen regional cooperation and integration to progress members’ shared ambitions of sustainable development, economic growth, good governance and security in the pacific region
• Noted that disarmament has been long standing regional priority, primarily on nuclear issues
• Informed that legislative drafting support available from PIFS
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On the road to accession: Samoa’s experience (L.L. Taefu, Samoa)

- Highlighted the importance of the work by PGA
- Shared info on the steps undertaken with respect to Samoa’s accession (draft instrument currently for final clearance)
- Emphasized the importance of increasing awareness, stimulating adherence and promoting greater engagement – need to involve right people (PIFS to update leaders)
- Stressed the responsibility of SNP in the region to do their part in making the world a safer place to live

Accession to the BWC: Vanuatu’s experience (J. Tevi, Vanuatu)

- Provided an overview on domestic ratification process of treaties, incl. BWC
- Noted existing challenges and highlighted need for tech assistance on capacity building and in domestication of the Convention
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Presentation of a Draft Framework BWC (J. Dumukuro, Fiji)

• Presented the BWC Draft Framework, which should serve as a basis for drafting instructions in order to empower national stakeholders to carry out functions by law

• Underlined the role of the existing Multi-Agency Taskforce Advisory Group (MATAG) as a key element in the BWC Framework

• Raised the possibility of using the Pacific Island Development Forum (PIDF) as a platform with respect to further promotion and universalization of the BWC in the region

Australian Domestic Pathogen Security: The Security Sensitive Biological Agents Regulatory Scheme (V. Matassa, Australia)

• Informed that SSBA aims to promote awareness of the importance of security in limiting the opportunities for acts of bio crime or bio terrorism with harmful biological agents

• Expressed readiness to share various educational material (fact sheets, guidelines, newsletters) and facilitate contact with natl. authorities from DoH
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Regional efforts to mitigate biological threats (R. Prasad, FNU)

- Provided a historic account of use of BWs and CWs and related efforts to prohibit them
- Described in detail classes of BW agents, effects and lethality rates – highlighted agents affecting humans, livestock and agriculture
- Highlighted the obstacles that need to be overcome by non-state actors to successfully weaponized and use BWs
- Presented lessons re. detection, diagnosis and surveillance

Plenary discussion: Biological weapons, health security and the environment (J.P. Zanders, ODA)

- Encouraged to come up with possibilities for reaching out to SNPs
- Discussed possible ways to present common positions to weigh in on decision making
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Parliamentarians for Global Action (P. Bacroft, PGA)

- Highlighted the bifurcate role of parliamentarians in the process – not only advocate, but also law making role
- Stressed the importance of involving parliamentarians early in the process of legislation
- Noted the benefit of having a regional network of parliamentarians to engage in the universalization of the BWC

Benefits after accession/succession (J.P. Zanders, ODA)

- Presented the benefits of being a SP – most notably highlighting benefits under Article X of the BWC
- Informed about assistance available (incl. Art X database) to enhance national implementation
- Highlighted benefits of BWC sponsorship programme incl. its functioning
Obligations after accession/succession (A. Lampalzer, ODA)

- Presented key obligations such as domestic legislation, NCP nomination, CBMs
- Highlighted the financial obligations of SPs
- Informed that assistance is available to meet these obligations

BWC in the broader legal context (A. Woodward, VERTIC)

- Highlighted that BWC is part of a wider (legal) web of prevention
- Presented different legal instruments such as GP, UNSCR 1540 and rel. legal instruments from other international organizations such as WHO, FAO, WTO
- Informed about the BWC’s contribution to different objectives under the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals
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BWC status of Nauru (D. Jacob, Nauru)

• Informed that Nauru became 168 SP, acceded 5 March 2013, Convention and Treaties Desk designated as NCP Nauru in the process of preparing its first CBM

• Noted that Reg. WS in Fiji represented the first event attended on BWC matters

National implementation of the BWC (A. Woodward, VERTIC)

• Underlined that natl. implementation is a process, not an event

• Explained national implementation requirements and measures applicable under the BWC and highlighted benefits

• Informed about different possible approaches to natl. implementation

• Informed about the VERTIC Tools available
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First impressions by states not party to the BWC

- Lack of information/awareness on BWC – reg. WS first opportunity to learn about BWC
- Overall, challenges do not seem insurmountable
- Rel. modest requirements with respect to joining BWC (incl. assessed contributions)
- Need for cooperation and coordination among various natl. stakeholders – “get the right people involved”
- Need for legislative assistance raised
- Consider follow-up WS post - accession to address natl. implementation issues
- Means for capacity building available

Other feedback shared

- Set timelines of issues to be tackled before next regional WS
- Consider using centralized focal point from the region
- Consider regional effort as regards assistance
- Raise awareness at level including make use of PIFS and MSG as potential platforms
Vinaka vakalevu & Ni Sa moce!