

**Council Decision CFSP/2016/51 of 18 January 2016
in support of the Biological Weapons Convention**

Report

**Regional workshop to promote the
universalisation of the BWC in the Pacific**



Nadi, Fiji, 27 – 28 July 2017

On 27 and 28 July 2017, Fiji hosted a regional workshop on universalisation of the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). With five States in the Pacific region not yet party to the BWC (Kiribati, Micronesia, Niue, Samoa and Tuvalu), the main objective of the regional workshop was to raise awareness of the BWC in the region and to promote the efforts of these States towards accession to the Convention. Almost 40 participants from across the region attended the workshop.

1 Participation

The regional workshop in support of the universalisation of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) was held in Nadi, Fiji on 27 and 28 July 2017. It targeted States not yet party to the BWC in the Pacific Region. 37 persons participated in the workshop.

Pacific Islands not party to the BWC (4): Kiribati, Niue, Samoa, Tuvalu

States Parties to the BWC (5): Australia, Fiji, Nauru, USA, Vanuatu

EU: European Union Delegation (EUDEL), Suva

International Organisations (3): Office of the Resident Coordinator, UN Multi-Country Office Suva; Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS); UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) – Geneva Branch

Civil society (2): Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA); Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC)

2 Proceedings

The workshop took place in Nadi, Fiji.¹ The Ministry of Defence and National Security of Fiji contributed financially to the event.

¹ The presentations are available at:

[https://www.unog.ch/unog/website/disarmament.nsf/\(httpPages\)/653E648E9A2C47E2C12581770033CD1A?OpenDocument](https://www.unog.ch/unog/website/disarmament.nsf/(httpPages)/653E648E9A2C47E2C12581770033CD1A?OpenDocument)

Thursday, 27 July

Mr Ratu Inoke Kubuabola (Minister for Defence and National Security, Fiji) welcomed the participants and the representatives of the regional States not yet party to the BWC in particular. He noted the Convention's crucial role in the fast changing security environment. He illustrated the potential impact of the use of biological weapons with reference to the human toll and material cost of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. He urged that the States not yet party prioritise their accession to the BWC.

In his opening speech, **Mr Corrado Pampaloni** (Deputy Head of the EU Delegation for the Pacific and Chargé d'Affaires) highlighted the EU's role in disarmament and non-proliferation and the financial support the EU gives to the BWC. He noted in particular the importance of universal adherence to the Convention.

He was followed by **Ms Ellen Alradi** (Senior Peace and Development Advisor, Office of the Resident Coordinator, UN Multi-Country Office Suva). Stressing the fundamental role the BWC plays in collective security, she stated her Office's preparedness to collaborate with other regional institutions to promote and ensure full adherence by all Pacific Islands to the Convention.

The three BWC Depositary States also offered words of welcome. The **Russian Federation** (message read by Dr Jean Pascal Zanders) emphasised the continuing need to exclude completely the possibility of biological agents and toxins being used as weapons. It also valued the right to socioeconomic development and full participation in international cooperation in the field of the life sciences for peaceful purposes.

Ms Lourdes Costacamps (Office of the Biological Policy Staff, State Department, USA) emphasised the importance of universal adherence to the BWC because of its core legal requirement that no one may acquire or possess biological weapons. Most countries do not have biological weapons, but the threats posed by non-state actors could still leave their societies vulnerable. Moreover, BWC-related work also strengthens national and international capabilities to detect and respond to a disease outbreak, regardless of its cause.

The **United Kingdom** (message read by Dr Jean Pascal Zanders) also stressed the importance of universal adherence and declared its readiness to provide advice and assistance to those States seeking to become party to the BWC. It will also support effective implementation of treaty obligations. As a first step it encouraged States not yet party to the Convention to set a clear timeline for accession to demonstrate determination and commitment to a goal shared by all.

As final speaker in the opening session **Dr Alex Lampalzer** (Deputy Chief, BWC Implementation Support Unit) welcomed participants on behalf of UNODA and thanked Fiji for hosting the workshop, as well as the representatives of regional organisations and civil society representatives for their engagement and willingness to share their knowledge and experience.

In the first thematic session, **Dr Jean Pascal Zanders** (UNODA) offered an overview of Council Decision 2016/51 through which the European Union supports the universalisation and strengthening of the BWC.² It is the fourth such instrument since 2006 and runs from January 2016 until January 2019. The EU has allocated 2.34 million Euros to the project. Dr Zanders summarised the activities already completed and those under preparation, and concluded with an overview of the principal goals for the universalisation workshop for the Pacific Region.

Dr Lampalzer next described the BWC, detailing its status, the organisation of activities taking place in Geneva, and the challenges facing the Convention. He also addressed the importance and implications of joining the BWC.

Dr Zanders then presented an overview of the biological weapons threat spectrum and the different ways pathogens might be used to target humans, animals or plants. He also placed biological weapons threats in the context of natural disease outbreaks. Most preparations to build capacity and resilience address both natural and deliberate

² The full text of the Council Decision is available at [https://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/\(httpAssets\)/3278FA0ECF3132A8C12580A00035AF4B/\\$file/CFS-P-2016-51+Council+Decision+in+support+of+the+BWC.pdf](https://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/3278FA0ECF3132A8C12580A00035AF4B/$file/CFS-P-2016-51+Council+Decision+in+support+of+the+BWC.pdf)

disease. He concluded by noting that preventing deliberate disease is a responsibility not just of the state but of all stakeholders, including individuals, research facilities and companies.

The second thematic session focussed on the regional context of the BWC. **Ms Angela Woodward** (Deputy Executive Director, VERTIC) contrasted the participation of Pacific Islands in the BWC with that in the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) to which all Pacific Islands are party. She also referred to the regional disarmament legacy that followed from the nuclear testing in the Pacific and highlighted the importance of the BWC's biosafety and -security dimensions for the Pacific Islands.

After outlining the Pacific Islands Forum's principal objectives, **Ms Lorraine Kershaw** (International Legal Adviser, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat) also noted that the nuclear testing had made disarmament into a long-standing regional priority. This has not diminished the political support for international disarmament efforts in other areas, including the BWC, CWC, the Anti-Personnel Landmine Convention and the Arms Trade Treaty. Counter-terrorism is another regional security priority. She concluded by pointing out the link between the BWC and the obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) and the Model Law on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational and Organised Crime developed by the Pacific Islands Forum (revised in 2016).

The afternoon was dedicated to regional experiences with the BWC and biological threats. **Ms Jenny Tevi** (Acting Head, Treaties and Conventions Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vanuatu) recounted how Vanuatu had succeeded to the BWC after its independence from the UK. However, as no formal records of being a Party to the BWC could be found, Vanuatu had to start up a process to succeed to the Convention, which it completed in 2016. She noted that her country does not possess, import or export biological weapons, but highlighted the need for international assistance with the development of domestic legislation and implementation of treaty obligations (including the confidence-building measures or CBMs under the BWC).

Mr Lemalu Lemi Taefu (Associate Minister for Natural Resources and Environment and Member of Parliament, Samoa) described Samoa's road to BWC accession. At the time of the workshop, the internal process for accession had been completed and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade had been instructed to prepare the instrument of accession for submission with one or more of the Depositary States. In his presentation Mr Taefu also highlighted the role of parliamentarians in the process, including the support received from the international non-governmental organisation Parliamentarians for Global Action, and the many tiny steps that are required to finalise accession.

Mr Joji Dumukuro (Senior Defence Adviser, Fiji) explained the recent steps undertaken by Fiji to meet its national implementation obligations under the BWC. He underscored the importance of involving national stakeholders and outlined a detailed plan for a national authority in which the various stakeholders will have their defined roles and responsibilities.

Mr Vincent Matassa (First Secretary, Political-Economic, Australian High Commission, Suva) gave a detailed overview of Australia's domestic pathogen security as comprised in the Security Sensitive Biological Agents (SSBA) Regulatory Scheme. Its implementation has many different dimensions and involves the participation of different entities. Even though compliance is successful overall, future challenges have been identified and will have to be addressed to maintain the relevancy of the regulatory scheme.

Professor Rajendra Prasad (Fiji National University, Lautoka Campus) impressed upon participants the breadth of the security challenges posed by pathogens and the nature of the necessary measures to counter them.

The afternoon ended with a plenary discussion moderated by **Dr Zanders** on biological weapons, health security and the environment. Among the various issues raised was the need to identify opportunities for reaching out to States not yet party to the BWC including in bilateral contacts between Pacific Islands and via regional organisations. Given the fact that besides Fiji no Pacific Island has a Permanent Representation to the UN in Geneva, ways to present

common positions to weigh on decision-making in the BWC meetings should be explored by the regional partners.

Friday, 28 July

Dr Zanders opened the second day with a detailed overview of the benefits States can accrue by joining the BWC. He first discussed the purpose of Article X of the Convention before describing how States Parties have developed strategies for its implementation. Details included the Article X database maintained by the BWC Implementation Support Unit. He next introduced the opportunities for assistance with national implementation and ended by outlining the sponsorship programme which is designed to support developing States send national experts to BWC meetings in Geneva.

Dr Lampalzer followed up with a review of the obligations States will assume when joining the BWC. He addressed the following issues: financial contributions, the need for a national contact point or national authority, the obligation to transpose the treaty obligations into national implementing legislation, and the annual submission of the CBM reports. Addressing a concern of several Pacific Islands he reassured all five States not yet party to the BWC that upon accession their annual contribution would amount to a mere US\$10. He did not foresee elaborate CBM submissions for them, and emphasised that their participation in the process would equally help them fulfil their obligations under UNSC Resolution 1540.

In the next presentation, **Ms Woodward** picked up on the latter point and offered more detail on UNSC Resolution 1540 requirements in relationship to the BWC. Recalling that the BWC addresses biological weapons against humans, animals and plants, she furthermore situated the benefits and obligations under the BWC with reference to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Health Regulations (IHR), the World Animal Health Organisation (OIE), and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO). She also described relevant parts of the work of other international bodies and agreements, including the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures promulgated by the World Trade

Organisation (WTO), the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and the Convention on Biodiversity.

Ms Darina Jacob (Foreign Service Officer, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Nauru) reviewed the status of Nauru's participation in the BWC and the challenges the country faces. Nauru acceded to the BWC on 5 March 2013 and has now designated the Convention and Treaties Desk as National Contact Point. It is in the process of preparing its first CBM submission. She also brought up the geographic isolation of the Pacific Islands, adding that the present workshop in Fiji represented the first time that Nauru has participated in a BWC-specific event.

Ms Woodward then presented a detailed overview of the different dimensions of national implementation of the BWC. She reassured regional participants that national implementation reflects the specific requirements of each individual State Party and that only relevant measures need to be developed. Different approaches to fulfilling the requirements exist, and the choice may depend on the quality and relevance of existing legislation as well as the country's legal system. She ended with a review of the assistance tools developed by her organisation, VERTIC.

In the final thematic session, **Mr Peter Barcroft** (Director of Peace & Democracy Programme, Parliamentarians for Global Action) highlighted the importance of parliamentarians as a key stakeholder community in both the processes of joining international treaties, including the BWC, developing the required legislation to fulfil the treaty obligations, and ensuring that those obligations are met. Like several speakers before him, he linked implementation of the BWC to UNSC Resolution 1540.

The substantive part of the workshop concluded with a plenary discussion session moderated by **Dr Zanders**, in which the representatives of the non-States Parties commented on the workshop proceedings and on how they saw the road forward towards accession. They said that they now had a better understanding of the requirements and the steps they need to undertake in order to join. They also appreciated the level and types of international assistance available. Nevertheless, both they and representatives from States Parties

expressed concern about whether there would be a follow-up workshop or additional activities to promote universalisation and treaty implementation. The role of regional organisations in sustaining the momentum achieved during the workshop was also raised.

In the closing session **Dr Lampalzer** summarised the presentations and discussions. **Mr Osea Cawaru** (Permanent Secretary of Defence and National Security, Fiji) then closed the workshop. He reiterated some of the problems shared by most of the Pacific Islands, such as cost. However he was also pleased to note the degree of assistance available to undertake the sometimes complex tasks of fulfilling treaty obligations. With respect to universalisation he accepted that some regional States may perceive a greater urgency of some other issues, notably climate change. However, he balanced this perception against the risk of a major epidemic or case of deliberate release of pathogens, either one of which would cause major, multi-layered problems for the Pacific societies. The challenge is to put the necessary resources and capacities in place ahead of such a calamity. He noted the value of exploring regional cooperation in this respect. He ended by thanking the conveners, speakers and participants for their efforts and expressed his hope that the region would no longer stand in isolation with regard to the BWC.

Asia - Pacific BWC Universalisation Workshop

Nadi, Fiji - 27-28 July 2017

States not party to the BWC

Kiribati

Participant

Mr Eeri Aritiera

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Operation), Kiribati Police Service, Tarawa, Kiribati

Niue

Mr Aldric Hipa

Assistant Crown Counsel, Crown Law Office, Niue

Samoa

Mr Lemalu Lemi Taefu

Associate Minister for Natural Resources and Environment; Member of Parliament, Samoa

Tuvalu

Ms Vaipuna M Liai

Crown Council, Office of the Attorney General, Tuvalu

Fiji (Host Country)

Mr Kanagasapapathy Bhaheerathan

Biosecurity Authority of Fiji

Mr Osea Cawaru

Permanent Secretary of Defence and National Security

Mr Dip Chand

Ministry of Health

Mr Nitesh Datt

Biosecurity Authority of Fiji

Mr Tomasi Drisi

Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority

Mr Joji Dumukuro

Ministry of Defence and National Security

Mr Nitya Goundar

Fiji Police Force (Border Unit)

Mr Arvind Gounder

Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority

Mr Pita Keni

Fiji Police Force (Border Unit)

H. E. Mr Ratu Inoke Kubuabola

Minister for Defence and National Security

Ms Deepika Lata

Biosecurity Authority of Fiji

Mr Vueti May

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr Luke Nawadra

Ministry of Health

Mr Serupepeli Neiko

Fiji Police Force

Prof Rajendra Prasad

Fiji National University

Ms Salanieta Radaniva

Fiji Police Force (Intelligence Bureau)

Prof Anil Rana

Fiji National University

Mr Virendra Reddy

Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority

Mr Netani Rika

MP, Fiji Parliament

	Ms Daniella Salem Mr Jasmel Singh Mr Peni Soronameca Mr Anand Tyagi Mr Apolosi Veve	Fiji Police Force (Forensics) Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji Airports Fiji Limited Fiji National University Republic of Fiji Military Forces
BWC States Parties		
Australia	Mr Vincent Matassa	First Secretary Political/Economic, Australia High Commission Suva
Nauru	Ms Darina Jacob	Foreign Service Officer, International Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Nauru
Vanuatu	Ms Jenny Tevi	Acting Head, Treaties and Conventions Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vanuatu
United States	Ms Lourdes M. Costacamps	Program Specialist, Office of the Biological Policy Staff, State Department, USA
Regional organisations		
Pacific Island Forum	Ms Lorraine Kershaw	International Legal Adviser, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Suva
UNDP Pacific Office	Ms Ellen Alradi	Senior Peace and Development Advisor, Office of the Resident Coordinator, UN Multi-Country Office Suva
Expert speakers / NGOs		
Parliamentarians for Global Action VERTIC	Mr Peter Barcroft (USA) Ms Angela Woodward (NZ)	Director of Peace & Democracy Programme Deputy Executive Director
BWC Implementation Support Unit	Dr Alex Lampalzer	Political Affairs Officer
UN Office for Disarmament Affairs	Dr Jean Pascal Zanders	Political Affairs Officer
EEAS (EUDEL)	Mr Corrado Pampaloni	Deputy Head of the EU Delegation for the Pacific and Chargé d'Affaires