1 Participation

1.1 The third regional workshop preparing for the Eighth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) was held in New Delhi, India on 29 and 30 August 2016. It targeted BWC States Parties in South and South-East Asia. 60 persons participated in the workshop.

1.2 Regional States Parties present (12): Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India (host country), Iran, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Viêt-Nam

1.3 EU Member States – Local representation (4+1): Belgium, France, Hungary, Sweden, as well as the European Union Delegation (EUDEL)


1.5 Civil society (2): Philippine Biosafety and Biosecurity Association (PhBBA), University of Sussex, (United Kingdom)

1.6 Observer State Parties (4): Brazil, Japan, Russian Federation, United States

2 Meeting organisation

The workshop took place at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA). The Ministry of External Affairs of India contributed financially to the event.

2.1 Monday, 29 August

Mr Amandeep Singh Gill (Joint Secretary (D&ISA), Ministry of External Affairs, India) welcomed the participants. In his opening speech Ambassador Jacek Bylica (Special Envoy for Disarmament and Non-proliferation, European External Action Service) highlighted the European Union’s role in disarmament and non-
proliferation and the financial support the EU gives to UN initiatives in this area. He was followed by **Ambassador Tomasz Kozlowski** (Head, Delegation of the European Union to India) who described bilateral interactions between the EU and India. **Ambassador Dr György Molnár** (Hungary, President-Designate of the Eighth BWC Review Conference) referred to the stakes involved in the Eighth Review Conference. He described how States Parties had agreed to a novel approach by having two sessions of the Preparatory Committee, which has allowed States Parties to present their proposals ahead of the Review Conference.

In his keynote speech, **Mr Kim Won-soo** (High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, United Nations) noted the robustness of the BWC but recognised that the current rapid advances in the life sciences and biotechnology pose a challenge to the future of the disarmament treaty. He expressed satisfaction with the growing number of States Parties, whom he urged to greater participation in the annual Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) returns. He also linked the BWC to the global health challenges and argued that implementation of several articles, including VII and X, can help facing them. He mentioned various initiatives the UN is undertaking or preparing to address the possibility of an attach with biological weapons (BW) and concluding by wishing participants a successful outcome for the Review Conference.

In the first substantive session of the morning, **Mr Daniel Feakes** (Chief, BWC Implementation Support Unit) described the status of the BWC and gave a detailed briefing on the review process. **Ambassador Bylica** next discussed EU Council Decision 2016/51 (CFSP), situated it in the EU’s overall strategy on disarmament and proliferation prevention and described the additional projects foreseen for the period 2016–19 under the funding decision. **Mr Feakes** then concluded the morning with a detailed review of the 2012–15 intersessional meetings and listing possible topics that may feature high in the Review Conference discussions in November.

The afternoon started off with a discussion round moderated by **Dr Jean Pascal Zanders** (Political Affairs Officer, UNODA - Geneva Branch) on States Parties’ views on how to take the BWC forward. Themes touched upon include how states that do not face acute BW threats can implement the BWC, the absence of institutional support and verification provisions for the BWC and the utility of continuing the intersessional meetings if no progress can be made in these matters. Several States Parties expressed their expectations of concrete outcomes for the Re-
view Conference, but were also realistic about potential obstacles. Balanced outcomes were defined in terms of addressing all treaty provisions and benefits for all the regions. Participants were also looking for concrete, actionable programme elements.

The first thematic session focussed on the review of science and technology. **Mr Roman Babushkin** (Counsellor, Embassy of the Russian Federation, New Delhi) introduced a discussion note on the subject matter. He emphasised the importance of assessing the impact of science and technology on the BWC and referred to the Russian proposal to have a Scientific Advisory Committee established for the period of 2017-2021 by the Eighth Review Conference. Its purpose would be to assess developments in scientific and technological fields relevant to the Convention, and to report and provide relevant recommendations to States Parties. The Committee would comprise 20–25 experts appointed by States Parties through their regional groups.

In the second thematic session **Ambassador Molnár** described progress towards universalisation of the BWC. He highlighted the steps he, as well as the Hungarian Government, are undertaking to engage with states not yet party to the BWC and the responsibilities of all States parties towards achieving that goal. He focussed on challenges still remaining to catch up with the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, citing Africa and the Middle East as two regions requiring a lot of work still. **Mr Tirtha Raj Wagle** (Undersecretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nepal) explained Nepal’s preparations to ratify the BWC. He stated that all requirements, including the drafting of national implementation legislation, have been met and that Parliament could vote on the bills at any time. The National Authority for Disarmament Affairs (NADA) would become responsible for BWC implementation and be the national focal point. Nepal is the only South and South-East Asian country outside the BWC.

The third thematic session looked at national implementation issues. **Dr Edith Sangalang Tria** (Philippine Biosafety and Biosecurity Association and Medical Specialist, Ministry of Health, Philippines) provided a detailed overview of the Philippine’s biorisk management preparations, various aspects of national implementation measures and the training programmes for individuals with different responsibilities under those provisions as well as students and future scientists and professionals. **Dr Zalini Yunus** (Science & Technology Research Institute for Defence (STRIDE), Ministry of Defence, Malaysia) looked at the different formal
national implementation measures Malaysia has adopted as well as various other steps undertaken, including is the areas of biorisk management and codes of conduct. She noted the gaps in the BWC, most notably the absence of a verification machinery, and the ambiguities the international regime seems to leave unaddressed. These include the weaknesses in the CBM procedures, persistent perceptions among scientists that they need not be involved in the BWC processes if they do not have BW, and problems relating to the enactment and effective implementation of laws, rules and regulations. She discerned great value in the continuation of training exercises, awareness raising, and expanding partnerships involving key stakeholders, as well as international cooperation to enhance capabilities and capacities. Mr Christopher Park (Director, Office of the Biological Policy Staff, US Department of State) regretted the poor statistics indicating the degree of national implementation, and in particular the participation in the CBMs. He saw benefits in sustained assistance of States Parties in respect, for which the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) can play an important role. He referred to the US proposal to have Capacity-Building Officer post in the ISU. This person would be responsible for facilitating such cooperation, whether for national implementation, or to build disease surveillance, preparedness, and response capabilities or address other capacity needs. He also elaborated on an implementation review exercise involving Canada, Chile, Ghana, Mexico, and the United States, which is an experiment exploring and testing innovative approaches to sharing information and strengthening national implementation systems. The USA plans to submit a working paper on the experience.

2.2 Tuesday, 30 August

The second day opened with a presentation by Mr Arvind Madhavan (Director, D&ISA, Ministry of External Affairs, India) on Article III of the BWC and India’s policies on export controls. India’s basic position is that a balance must be struck between Articles III (export controls) and X (international cooperation). India has had export controls in place since 1947 and these have gradually been improved and expanded to meet changing requirements. Now they are part of national implementation legislation. India has taken a holistic approach via the Weapons of Mass Destruction Act, which prohibits unlawful activities and controls all transfers of relevant items. India has submitted a joint working paper on export controls with the USA.

Next on the agenda was Article VII of the BWC on the provision of assistance to a State Party that has been exposed to dangers as a consequence of a violation of
the treaty. **Dr Zanders** retraced the origins of the article and argued that despite clarifications by States Parties recorded in the final document of several Review Conferences there still exists scope for ambiguity concerning the phrasing of different parts of the article. In addition, it is far from clear how a request for assistance might play out if the article were to be invoked. **Mr Siddhartha Nath** (Counsellor, Permanent Mission of India to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva) underscored the importance of Article VII, not in the least because of the security guarantees it offers, which in turn buttress the case for universal adherence to the BWC and contribute to the sense of ownership of the treaty by States Parties. He then proceeded with a detailed overview of a French-Indian working paper on establishing a database that would include offers for assistance by States Parties. He proposed the database as a possible practical outcome for the Eighth Review Conference.

In the final thematic session of the workshop **Dr Caitriona McLeish** (University of Sussex, UK) laid out detailed proposals on how States Parties could move forward with the concrete implementation of Article X on cooperation. The ideas ranged from consolidation of activities over the establishment of the position for an Article X implementation officer in the BWC Implementation Support Unit and national reporting on Article X activities to improvements to the current database matching offers and requests by States Parties and regional technical workshops. She also proposed that States Parties set up an Article X working group to address gaps and share opportunities.

**Mr Feakes** next offered some concluding thoughts before handing over the microphone to Ambassadors **Molnár, Bylica** and **Jayant Prasad** (Director General, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi) for their closing remarks.

In the afternoon participants visited the *International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB)* in New Delhi.