Summary report of the regional seminar for
Latin America
Brasilia, Brazil, 22–23 August 2016

31 October 2016

1 Participation

1.1 The second regional workshop preparing for the Eighth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) was held in Brasilia, Brazil on 22 and 23 August 2016. It targeted BWC States Parties in Latin America. 61 persons participated in the workshop.

1.2 Regional States present (14): Argentina, Brazil (host country), Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela

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

1.4 International Organisations (3): European External Action Service (EEAS), UN Development Programme (UNDO), UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) – Geneva Branch

1.5 Civil society (1): Academy of Sciences of Cuba

1.6 Observer State Parties (1): Russian Federation

2 Meeting organisation

The workshop took place in Brasilia, Brazil in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil.

2.1 Monday, 22 August

Ambassador Fernando Simas Magalhães (Undersecretary for Political Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brazil) welcomed the participants. In his opening speech Ambassador Joao Gomes Cravinho (Head of European Union Delegation to Brazil) highlighted the European Union’s partnership with Brazil and
discussed the basic principles of the EU’s ambitions and action in disarmament and non-proliferation. 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 them to present their proposals ahead of the Review Conference.

In the first substantive session of the morning, Dr Alex Lampalzer (BWC Implementation Support Unit) described the status of the BWC and gave a detailed briefing on the review process. Mr Bruno Hanses (Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Arms Export Control Division, EEAS) 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. Dr Lampalzer 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. Participants stressed the need for a balanced outcome of the Review Conference. Among the themes that received the most attention were Article X on international cooperation, the need to enhance national capacities, and international assistance (Article VII). Converging views emerged on the need to revive negotiations on a legally binding protocol (which could take the form of an open-ended working group), concrete measures to implement Article X such as the establishment of a cooperation committee, and continuing efforts towards universalisation.

The first thematic session focussed on the review of science and technology. Mr Vladimir Koptev (Minister-Counsellor, Embassy of Russia in Brazil) 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 2017–21 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 on strengthening BWC implementation, Dr Sandra Cecilio de Souza Veloso (Science and Technology Analyst, Ministry of Science, Technology, Innovation and Communication, Brazil) outlined Brazil’s export control system for sensitive technologies, its structure and mechanisms for coordination among different departments and agencies. She then focussed on the coordination, monitoring and controls (including export control lists) pertaining to biological materials and relevant equipment. Professor Sergio de Jesus Jorge Pastrana (Academy of Sciences, Cuba) reflected on the activities of the Biosecurity Working Group of the Inter Academy Partnership (IAP). IAP is a global network of academies of science and medicine and is able to harness the expertise of the world’s scientific, medical and engineering leaders to advance sound policies, promote excellence in science education, improve public health, and achieve other critical development goals. IAP and its Biosecurity Working Group engage with international organisations such as the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) to draw attention to attention challenges and developments in different regions of the world. It assists with the dissemination of information to those regions, e.g. by supporting outreach workshops. It is committed to promoting and sustaining responsible conduct of science and the contribution of science to informed decision making. Within that framework, IAP activities focus on elements relevant to the effective implementation of the BWC, including monitoring and assessment of trends in science and technology, governance of research, and education about dual use issues.

2.2 Tuesday, 23 August

The second day opened with Ambassador Molnár’s report on 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.

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. **Dr Eduardo Hage Carmo** (Director of the Department of Communicable Diseases, Ministry of Health, Brazil) illustrated the response to health emergencies with Brazil’s preparations. The basic policy does not distinguish between natural or deliberate outbreaks. It is based on the 2005 International Health Regulations concerning health emergencies of international concern. The country has set up a national network for alert and response. He argued strongly in favour of the need for coordinated action between the different agencies on the national level. Brazil had activated the entire system to address any possible contingencies during the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

In the fifth thematic session **Dr Edith Valles** (Technical Advisor, Scientific and Technical Research Institute for Defence, Argentina) described Argentina’s process to comply with the Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) requirements. She stressed the importance of participation in the CBMs and then proceeded to explain how Argentina breaks down the process into different stages in order to meet the process deadlines (including submission by 15 April of each year). In her recommendation she noted the importance of raising the political relevancy of CBMs, the need for revising certain CBM forms (particularly E and G), the promotion of electronic submission and their translation into the official UN languages, and the need for training and assistance, which could be coordinated by the ISU.

**Dr Ricardo Aurélio Pinto Nascimento** (General Coordinator of the National Livestock Laboratory, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply, Brazil) discussed in the sixth thematic session on Article X how international cooperation can assist with biorisk management. He first described the high-containment laboratories in Brazil and associated biorisk management policies on both the regional and national levels. Dr Nascimento underscored that biorisk management also makes sense from an economic perspective. International cooperation may be most relevant relating to validation of internationally accepted methods and standards, full implementation of quality management, acquisition of equipment, and capacity building.

In the final thematic session **Colonel Chamom Malizia de Lamare** (CBRN Advisor for combatting terrorism, Ministry of Defence, Brazil) reviewed Brazil’s
preparations for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) incidents during the Olympic Games. He detailed the organisational structure put in place for the games and the specific activities undertaken by the Armed Forces. After the lunch break a Brazilian CBRN emergency team followed up with a demonstration of emergency procedures and decontamination in the parking area of the workshop venue.

The afternoon then continued with the second plenary session moderated by Dr Zanders on participants’ perspectives on a successful outcome of the Eighth Review Conference. Several interventions returned to the importance of Article X and agreement on practical measures at the Review Conference. These included the establishment of a cooperation committee. Some interveners also called for a return to the negotiation of a legally-binding protocol. Other topics raised were the need for a balanced mechanism for decision-making, universalisation and steps to foster greater transparency, including ameliorated CBMs. Noting regional convergence on different topics, several participants called for a more significant Latin American role in the Review Conference.

Dr Lampalzer next offered some concluding thoughts before handing over the microphone to Ambassador Molnár, Mr Hanses and Minister María Luisa Escorel de Moraes (Director General for International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brazil) for their closing remarks.