The 2018 – 2020 Intersessional Process: S&T themes considered by States Parties

Regional Workshop for the Middle East and North Africa: Implications of developments in science and technology for the Biological Weapons Convention

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Amman, Jordan

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Overview

• BWC in a nutshell
• Relevant outcomes from the Eighth Review Conference and the 2012-2015 Intersessional Programme
• Sub-topics on S&T to be considered under the Meeting of Experts 2 (‘Review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the BWC
What is the Biological Weapons Convention all about?

- prohibits development, production, stockpiling, acquisition, retention or transfer of BWs
- opened for signature on 10 April 1972
- EiF on 26 March 1975
- First multilateral disarmament treaty banning an entire category of WMD
- Cornerstone of multilateral disarmament regime
- Non-discriminatory in nature
- Unlimited duration
- Open to any state

180 States Parties
6 Signatories
11 States not party
Support for the BWC

15 new States Parties since 2012
How does the BWC work?

- No intl. verification regime
- No own separate international organization
- States Parties are obliged to translate the commitments found in the Convention into effective national action
- Intersessional work programmes between the Review Conferences that include annual Meetings of Experts and Meetings of States Parties
- Highest Organ: Review Conference
- Chair 2018 Meeting of States Parties:
  - Mr. Ljupcho Jivan Gjorgjinski (FYROM)
- Three regional groups
  - Eastern European Group (Lithuania)
  - NAM (Venezuela)
  - Western Group (Australia)
- Three Depositories
- Costs are shared by all States Parties - $1,519,800 for 2018
How is the BWC implemented?

• States Parties are obliged to translate the commitments found in the Convention into effective national action
• National implementation requires coordination and close cooperation among a number of government departments
• Important contributions and complementary measures by universities, NGOs and industry
• National Contact Points established under the BWC
• Confidence Building Measures
National Contact Points (NCPs)

• Sixth Review Conference decided that each State Party should designate a NCP

• Role and responsibilities:
  • Act as national focal point on BWC matters and communicate with other SPs and relevant IOs
  • Coordinate and facilitate national implementation
  • Coordinate the submission of CBMs

• Nomination form can be downloaded from BWC website

• Information on NCPs accessible via restricted part BWC website

• NCP Info provided:
  • 116 States Parties (64%)
  • 2 Signatory States
  • 3 States not party
  • 1 regional organization
Aim of CBMs

... to prevent or reduce the occurrence of ambiguities, doubts and suspicions, and in order to improve international cooperation in the field of peaceful biological activities

BWC/CONF.II/13/II, p.6

Role
- Enhance transparency & strengthen trust
- Increase confidence in compliance
- Provide a useful review of the status of national implementation
- Not a tool for verification

Implementation Aspects
- Politically binding
- Annual submission (deadline 15 April)
Confidence Building Measures

- **CBM A:**
  - Part 1: research centres and laboratories
  - Part 2: Natl. biological defence R&D programmes

- **CBM B:** Info on outbreaks of infectious diseases and similar occurrences, that seem to deviate from the normal pattern

- **CBM C:** Encouragement of publication of results and promotion of use of knowledge

- **CBM E:** legislation, regulations and other measures

- **CBM F:** past activities in offensive and/or defensive biological research and development programmes

- **CBM G:** vaccine production facilities
CBM related challenges

**Challenges**

- Submission rate is low
- Technical difficulties by some States Parties in completing submissions
- CBMs not translated into all official languages
- No follow-up / analysis of CBMs provided

**Potential Solutions**

- Consider step-by-step approach
- Look at other returns
- Assistance available (BWC ISU, Art X database, CBM Guide)
BWC Cooperation & Assistance Database

• ISU established and administers a database, open to all States Parties, where the requests and offers are stored
• States Parties may bilaterally match offers with requests or use the services of the ISU to facilitate the exchange of information
• Database was improved in 2017
  • 39 active requests
  • 60 assistance offers

Australia Group
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>BWC</th>
<th>1925 Geneva Protocol</th>
<th>BWC Natl. Focal Point</th>
<th>Confidence Building Measures</th>
<th>Participation in BWC Meetings</th>
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<td>4 (2018)</td>
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## Resources to facilitate Treaty Implementation

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<tr>
<th>Weapon Category</th>
<th>Nuclear</th>
<th>Biological</th>
<th>Chemical</th>
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<tr>
<td>Treaty (Status)</td>
<td>NPT</td>
<td>CTBT</td>
<td>BWC</td>
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<td>Int. Org</td>
<td>IAEA</td>
<td>CTBTO</td>
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<td>MSs/SPs</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>180</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verification</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>❌</td>
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<td>Budget (Mio., 2018)</td>
<td>€370.5</td>
<td>$131,96</td>
<td>$1,52</td>
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<td>Personnel (approx.)</td>
<td>2,521</td>
<td>274</td>
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BWC – Strengths and weaknesses

**Strengths:**
- Clear, comprehensive ban: no exceptions, few loopholes
- Strong international norm, never publicly challenged
- Forum for dialogue and cooperation in meeting international security obligations
- Futureproof (so far...)

**Weaknesses:**
- No organisation or implementing body
- No systematic monitoring of implementation or compliance
- Uneven national implementation
- No systematic assessment of needs or provision of assistance
Introduction S&T Developments

Advances in life sciences occur at an unprecedented pace

• Ever improving ICT capabilities
• Effects of globalization - easier access to information, technology and equipment
• Convergence of the physical, digital, and bio disciplines - impacting all disciplines, economies and industries
• New methods of scientific collaboration including information sharing
• Bring unparalleled benefits, however come also with inherent risks (dual use nature of life sciences)

Biotechnology: increasingly important sector in global industry - major driver of economic growth
Science and Technology

• The global ability to detect and treat disease has been enhanced
• Recent advances have also facilitated the development of biological weapons
• Technological barriers to acquiring and using a biological weapon have been significantly eroded since the Seventh Review Conference
• Developments need to be monitored for the BWC

CAS-TWAS: Biotechnology in Developing Countries: Growth and Competitiveness (2016)

Outcome of the Eighth BWC Review Conference
7-25 November 2016

• Review the operation of the Convention taking into account new scientific and technological developments relevant to the BWC

• 12 Working Papers on S&T submitted, Switzerland: facilitator on S&T issues

• Many SPs recognized the importance of a S&T review mechanism under the Convention and supported the establishment of a working group on S&T for the 2017-2020 Intersessional programme

• Though SPs considered several proposals, they did not adopt any respective decision at the Review Conference
Intersessional Process (ISP) 2018-2020

5 Meetings of Experts (7-16 Aug 2018)

• MX1: Cooperation and assistance, with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation and assistance under Article X
• MX2: Review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention
• MX3: Strengthening national implementation
• MX4: Assistance, response and preparedness
• MX5: Institutional strengthening of the Convention

Meeting of States Parties (4-7 Dez 2018)
BWC Meeting of Experts 2
Review of developments in the field S&T related to the Convention, 9-10 August 2018

Topics to be discussed:

- Review of science and technology developments relevant to the Convention, including for the enhanced implementation of all articles of the Convention as well as the identification of potential benefits and risks of new science and technology developments relevant to the Convention, with a particular attention to positive implications;

- Biological risk assessment and management;

- Development of a voluntary model code of conduct for biological scientists and all relevant personnel, and biosecurity education, by drawing on the work already done on this issue in the context of the Convention, adaptable to national requirements;

- In 2018, the MX2 will address the specific topic of genome editing, taking into consideration, as appropriate, the issues identified above;

- Any other science and technology developments of relevance to the Convention and also to the activities of relevant multilateral organizations such as the WHO, OIE, FAO, IPPC and OPCW.
BWC Meetings of Experts 2018

• More expert oriented discussion (more political deliberations in the MSP)
• States Parties requested to submit Working Papers before 15 July
• States Parties request to submit Note Verbale with delegation by 20 July (note: INDICO registration for ext. participants)
• No general debate
• Each MX will adopt a factual report reflecting its deliberations, incl. possible outcomes
• Additionally, each MX Chair will prepare a paper listing inputs made during the discussions at each Meeting incl. presenting a summary of deliberations incl. possible outcomes from each MX to the MSP in December
Conclusions

• BWC established strong norm against BWs
• National implementation of the Convention vital
• Rapid Advances in life sciences have implications on BWC
• Importance of monitoring S&T developments
For more information ...

www.unog.ch/bwc

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