
Regional Confidence Building Measures

The countries of Hexagonale
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(Working Paper)

1. The Second Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction stressed its determination to strengthen the authority of the Convention and to enhance confidence in the implementation of its provisions. It was agreed that the States Parties were to implement, on the basis of mutual co-operation, specific measures, in order to prevent or reduce the occurrence of ambiguities.

2. The exchange of information, carried out on the basis of the Final Declaration of the Second Review Conference, has contributed to these goals, and confidence in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention has benefitted from it. However, experience proved that the implementation of confidence building measures, adopted by the Second Review Conference and the recommendations of the 1987 expert group meeting, were not entirely satisfactory and needed further improvement.

3. One possible way of strengthening the regime on the prohibition of biological weapons, encouraging adherence of all nations to the BWC and promoting cooperation amongst States Parties is the implementation of regional measures. Such measures, while not diminishing for any of the participants the significance of the global confidence building measures and exchange of information, could contribute to strengthening the universality of the Convention, determining additional ways of demonstrating compliance with the Convention and considering further incentives for strengthening the treaty regime. In this regard, the goal of universal adherence should be pursued without exceptions in any region, including Europe.

4. The Third Review Conference may recognize the significance of regional cooperation in enhancing the implementation of the provisions of the Convention. In this regard, the following measures could constitute a regional contribution to the cause of implementation:

A) promoting adherence, in the universal and especially in the regional context, to the BWC and the 1925 Geneva
Protocol by, inter alia, organizing meetings on the implementation of the BWC on a more regular basis with the participation of experts from the region, together with non-parties;

B) promoting that all States Parties which have reservations to the 1925 Geneva Protocol give a positive example through the withdrawal of their reservations, thereby making their renunciation of bacteriological methods of warfare unconditional;

C) demonstrating compliance with the Convention through measures of openness and transparency, on the basis of international obligations, as well as existing and future national legislation, e.g.
- opening all relevant national facilities to mutual visits of experts on a voluntary basis,
- providing information, as available, on the trade or transfer of materials that could potentially contribute to the development or production of biological or toxin weapons, and processing this information in the form of a computerized database;
- inviting, on a voluntary basis and in harmony with international obligations assumed by the States of the region, observers to military exercises where BW/CW defense activities are practiced, including representatives of States Parties from outside the region;

D) cooperating - as the need arises - in the survey of disease outbreaks, epidemics and other related events, in close collaboration with the relevant UN specialized agencies (e.g. WHO);

E) considering the establishment of a computerized data exchange between countries of a given region in order to contribute to the creation of a data bank of States Parties through the
- development of protein and nucleotide sequence libraries,
- exchange of software for data-base analysis,
- exchange of data on high-risk research centers
- compilation of data on reports published by military or civil research laboratories.