

Information Note¹

- Event:** Meetings of Experts 1, 2 and 3 to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC)
- Organizer:** Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit (BWC ISU)
- Date and Venue:** 7-10, 13 August 2018 – UN Office in Geneva
- Participants:** BWC States Parties: Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Holy See, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Venezuela, Yemen, Zimbabwe
Signatory States: Haïti, Tanzania
States neither Parties nor signatories: Israel
Specialised agencies and other international organisations: UN 1540 Group of Experts, CARICOM, European Union, International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, International Committee of the Red Cross, INTERPOL, International Science Technology Center, OPCW, WHO, UNICRI

Background

On 5 July 2018, the Chairs of the 2018 Meetings of Experts to the BWC – Mr Ljupčo Jivan Gjorgjinski, Ambassador Maria Teresa Almojuela, Ambassador Julio Herráiz España, Mr Daniel Nord and Mr Otakar Gorgol – sent a letter to the Chair of the 1540 Committee inviting a representative to take part in the 2018 Meetings of Experts to the BWC.

The purpose of the Meetings was to have technical discussions on a range of topics agreed upon by BWC States Parties at the 2017 Meeting of States Parties, including co-operation and assistance, with a particular focus on strengthening co-operation and assistance under Article X

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(MX1); review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the BWC (MX2); strengthening national implementation (MX3); assistance, response and preparedness (MX4); and institutional strengthening of the BWC (MX5). Each MX was to adopt a factual report reflecting its deliberations, including possible outcomes.

Highlights

Agenda item 5 of the first Meeting of Experts (MX1), which took place 7-8 August, was of particular relevance to resolution 1540 (2004) – “Review of the report by the ISU on the operation of the assistance and cooperation database established by the Seventh Review Conference and renewed by the Eighth Review Conference and consideration of its further operationalization, including measures to further strengthen the operation of the database, including in the light of BWC/MSP/2017/4”. The BWC ISU introduced a background paper on their assistance and cooperation database, which they developed in time for the Meeting of Experts to the BWC in 2017 with funding from Ireland. We learned that the database, which is no longer like the former offers and requests database which had been mandated by the Seventh Review Conference, is apparently receiving more usage. The public can view offers of assistance on the database (available at <https://bwc-articlex.unog.ch/>) but not the set of requests which requires log-in details granted by the BWC ISU.

At the request of the Chair of MX1, the 1540 Expert gave a statement on the Committee’s current assistance and matchmaking process, including a brief description of the procedures for responding to requests for and offers of assistance. The statement is available on the BWC ISU website.

Agenda item 8 of the second Meeting of Experts (MX2), which took place 9-10 August was “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”. This agenda item was of particular relevance to resolution 1540 (2004). Under this item, the 1540 Expert gave a statement drawing attention to, first, how the Security Council has called upon States to take into account developments on the evolving nature of risk of proliferation and rapid advances in science and technology in their implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) and, second, how the Council has requested the 1540 Committee to take note in its own work of the continually evolving nature of the risks of proliferation, including the use by non-State actors of rapid advances in science, technology and international commerce for proliferation purposes, in the context of implementation of the resolution. The 1540 Expert noted, for example, how the Committee decided to hold a closed expert-level meeting during its current Programme of Work to consider some issues raised in resolution 2325 (2016), including the challenge of controlling access to intangible transfers of technology, or ITT. The statement is available on the BWC ISU website.

Agenda item 4 of the third Meeting of Experts (MX3), which took place on 13 August, was on “Measures related to Article IV of the Convention”. Under this agenda item, the 1540 Expert delivered a statement in which he described the steps the 1540 Committee was taking under resolution 2325 (2016) and its current programme of work to strengthen national implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). This includes, for example, encouraging States to fully implement the

resolution; to submit initial and follow-up reports on implementation; to submit voluntary national action plans and provide a point of contact to the Committee; and to develop national control lists and adopt and enforce laws to prohibit non-State actors to manufacture, acquire, possess, develop, transport, transfer or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery. The statement is available on the BWC ISU website.

As with the other Meetings of Experts, there was interactive discussion among the BWC States Parties under each of the agenda items during MX3, including an intervention from Germany with a detailed description of a recent prosecution of an individual alleged to have developed ricin for use as a biological weapon.

Additional Comments

For further information, please contact the 1540 Committee experts by e-mail at 1540experts@un.org.