

Information Note¹

- Event:** PGA Regional Caribbean Workshop to Promote Universality and Implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540
- Organizer:** Parliamentarians for Global Action
- Date and Venue:** 29-30 April 2019, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
- Participants:** National participants: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Canada, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St Vincent and the Grenadines, St Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom
International organisations: 1540 Committee, UNLIREC, Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit (BWC ISU)
Regional organisations: CARICOM, Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), European Union
Civil society: Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)

Background

On 8 April 2019, Parliamentarians for Global Action sent a letter to the Chair of the 1540 Committee inviting the Committee to take part in a Regional Caribbean Workshop to Promote Universality and Implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540. The Workshop was supported by the Government of Canada.

The objective of the workshop was to convene leadership and prominent Parliamentarians from across the Caribbean region. Invited participants also included a number of international and regional organisations. It was organised in the context of PGA's Global Parliamentary Campaign to Promote Universality and Implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) and Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004).

Highlights

Day 1 (29 April):

Senator Wade Mark (Trinidad and Tobago) gave opening remarks. He underlined that the objective of the Workshop was not only to encourage remaining States to join the BWC, especially Haiti, but to implement the treaty as well as the binding obligations of resolution 1540 (2004). He observed that countries in the Caribbean do not possess NCB weapons but do possess

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dual-use material. In addition, there is some strategic trade of these materials, which should be controlled. Accordingly, he emphasised that implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) is certainly relevant to the region.

The next speaker was Ms Carla Hogan Rufelds, the High Commissioner of Canada to Trinidad and Tobago. Commissioner Rufelds observed that Haiti's ratification of the BWC would lead to its complete universality in the Western Hemisphere. She also thanked CARPHA and CARICOM for their efforts to strength implementation of the BWC in the Caribbean region, and thanked PGA for convening the workshop as a way to continue utilising MPs in the process of joining and implementing the BWC and, of course, resolution 1540 (2004). She observed that parliamentarians are key to getting States to join the BWC but also to providing resources for implementation of the BWC and resolution 1540 (2004).

The next speaker was Ambassador Tim Stew, High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to Trinidad and Tobago. He also encouraged Haiti to join the BWC, and stressed that legislation to implement the BWC is so important because it enables States to prevent biological weapons proliferation and respond to disease outbreaks whether they were caused intentionally or naturally.

The next speaker was Ambassador Aad Biesebroek, Head of Delegation of the European Union (EU) to Trinidad and Tobago. He briefly described the new EU Council decision in support of the BWC, which was adopted in January, as well as the EU's CBRN Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative.

During the session after these introductory remarks, the participants heard presentations by O'Neil Hamilton, 1540 Coordinator for CARICOM; Amanda Cowl, Political Affairs Officer in UNLIREC; Ngoc Phuong van der Blij, Political Affairs Officer in the BWC ISU and the 1540 Expert. The panel was moderated by Hon Rushton Paray, MP Trinidad and Tobago. The 1540 Expert gave the final presentation during this session, drawing particular attention to the obligation of States to adopt and enforce appropriate effective laws to prohibit the activities under OP2 of resolution 1540 (2004), as well as take and enforce effective measures to establish domestic controls to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons and their means of delivery, including by establishing appropriate controls over related materials as required under OP3 of resolution 1540 (2004). He also underlined that parliamentarians have a key role in enacting the necessary legislation to implement the obligations of the resolution.

During the next session, the participants heard from a number of parliamentarians, regarding the implementation of the BWC and resolution 1540 (2004), including Hon Parnel Charles, Speaker of House of Representatives, Parliament of Jamaica; Hon Barton Scotland, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana; Hon Jomo Sanga Thomas, Speaker of the House of Assembly, St Vincent and The Grenadines; Hon Andy Glenn Daniel, Speaker of the House of Assembly, St Lucia; and Hon Alincia William-Grant, President, Senate of Antigua and Barbuda. Senator Anita Haynes from Trinidad and Tobago moderated the panel. A highlight of this session was an understanding that parliamentarians need assistance in understanding the legislation that is brought before them, for example, to implement the BWC or resolution 1540 (2004), as they often are not involved in drafting it.

During the next session, the participants heard from the following parliamentarians regarding the implementation of the BWC and resolution 1540 (2004): Hon Caleb Desrameaux, Vice President, Chamber of Deputies, Haiti; Hon Julio César Valentín Jiminián, Senator, Senate and former Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, Dominican Republic; Hon Patrick Kensenhuis, Member of Parliament of Suriname; Senator Dr Romel Singer, Barbados; Hon Anthony Boatswain, MP Grenada. The panel was moderated by Senator Saddam Hosein, Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. A highlight of this session was Hon Desrameaux's explanation that the Haitian government had completed interministerial consultations on ratification of the BWC, which was now before the National Assembly.

Day 2 (30 April):

The second day started with a number of presentations from Shawn Kirk, National Contact Point for the BWC in the Ministry of Health of Trinidad and Tobago; Sacha Wallace-Sankarsingh, Bio-Risk Manager in CARPHA; and Rickard Kerwin, Project Leader for Biological & Chemical Security in the UNSCR 1540 Programming office of Global Affairs Canada's Weapons Threat Reduction Program. The panel was moderated by Senator Khadijah Ameen in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr Kirk stressed that Trinidad and Tobago's most urgent priority at the moment was proclamation of the 2012 BWC implementation act so that it will come into force. Ms Wallace-Sankarsingh set out a realistic way forward for the region on a framework for biosecurity with a number of activities and policies. Mr Kerwin described Canada's ongoing efforts in the region to support implementation of the BWC and resolution 1540 (2004).

The seminar concluded with a brief discussion of a draft Plan of Action, prepared by PGA, which the parliamentarians were encouraged to share with their colleagues for feedback in the coming weeks.

Additional Comments

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