

Information Note¹

Event:	Regional Workshop on the Biological Weapons Convention in the Pacific
Organizers:	Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch of the UNODA
Date and Venue:	11 -13 March 2025, Sydney, Australia
Participants:	<i>Government representatives from regional States:</i> Representatives and national Points of Contact from: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu <i>International representatives:</i> European Union (Sponsor), United Kingdom (Sponsor), UN Office Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) Biological Weapons Convention – Implementation Support Unit (BWC-ISU), UNODA 1540 Regional Coordinator, World Organisation for Animal Health and an Expert of the UN Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004).

Background

In a letter dated 31st January 2025 addressed to Chair of the 1540 Committee, the Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations invited the 1540 Committee to participate in the Regional Workshop on the Biological Weapons Convention in the Pacific, planned to be held in Sydney 11th to 13th March 2025. The letter further invited the representative of the Committee to attend meetings with senior Australian Government officials in Canberra on 14th March. This invitation was forwarded to the Committee under reference S/AC.44/2025/NOTE.008.

The workshop was aimed at national representatives, or entities serving as BWC National Contact Points (NCPs), as appointed by their respective national authorities or those who could potentially assume such responsibility, as well as representatives from relevant ministries charged with the implementation of the BWC and national experts in relevant fields. The workshop aimed to raise awareness about the requirements of the BWC and strengthen support for them by highlighting the benefits for Member States and the region. To this end, the aim was to familiarize participants with initiatives in support of national implementation of the BWC. The workshop was intended to serve as a forum for discussion, information exchange and sharing of best practices among NCPs and other stakeholders from the region related to strengthening the implementation of the BWC and resolution 1540 (2004).

¹ For information – not an official report. The views expressed here do not necessarily represent those of the 1540 Committee or of the organizers or participants in the event.

The workshop was of relevance to resolution 1540 (2004), as identified in the Mission Proposal, as follows:

- Resolution 1540 (2004) recognizes that most States have undertaken binding legal obligations under treaties to which they are parties or have made other commitments aimed at preventing the proliferation of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, and have taken effective measures to account for, secure and physically protect sensitive materials;
- Operative paragraph 1 of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) requires all States to refrain from providing any form of support to non-State actors that attempt to develop, acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, transfer or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery. Under operative paragraph 2 of the resolution all States are obliged to adopt and enforce appropriate effective laws prohibiting such activities by non-State actors on their territories. Operative paragraph 3 of resolution 1540 (2004) requires all States to 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;
- Operative paragraph 1 of resolution 2325 (2016) reiterates the requirements of resolution 1540 (2004), and re-emphasizes the importance for all States to implement fully and effectively that resolution;
- Operative paragraph 7 of resolution 1540 (2004) recognizes that some States may require assistance in implementing the provisions of the resolution. Operative paragraph 5 of resolution 1810 (2008) encourages States to convey assistance requests to the Committee. Resolution 2325 (2016) emphasizes the importance of providing States, in response to requests, with effective assistance that meets their needs;
- Operative paragraph 22 of resolution 2325 (2016) encourages the Committee to develop, in collaboration with international, regional and subregional organizations, assistance projects to support States in implementing resolution 1540 (2004) in order to facilitate the prompt and direct response to assistance requests;
- Operative paragraph 29 of resolution 2325 (2016) requests the 1540 Committee to continue to organize and participate in outreach events on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) at the international, regional, subregional and, as appropriate, national level; and
- Operative paragraph 21 of resolution 2663 (2022) urges the 1540 Committee, using its full expertise, to promote the facilitation of technical assistance through, as appropriate, organizing, co-organizing, participating in or supporting international and regional assistance conferences, which bring together Member States that request assistance with those offering assistance, and further encourages Member States, including those in the region with relevant expertise, relevant international, regional and subregional organizations, in a position to do so, to support such efforts.

Highlights

The workshop was attended by 25 representatives from 14 Pacific Island States and five international experts. The focus of the first day was an introduction to the BWC, the roles and responsibilities of BWC National Contacts Points with an emphasis on regional experience and best practice. The second day consisted of a table-top exercise around BWC Confidence Building Measures (CBM) reporting in the morning, followed by an afternoon session on other international instruments such as resolution 1540 (2004). The presentation on such resolution consisted of a brief introduction and overview of the obligations under the resolution, as well as the assistance mechanism through which Member States can request assistance from the Committee. There was also a presentation from the UNODA 1540 Regional Coordinator regarding region specific assistance.

Whilst the resolution 1540 (2004) session was scheduled in the afternoon of the second day, there was both mention of the resolution and some discussion during both the first day and morning of the second day during the post table-top exercise debrief. In particular, the discussion prior to the 1540 presentations were focused on issue around implementation of Operative Paragraph 3 of the resolution regarding border security and export controls. Of particular note was an in-depth discussion on the need for export control legislative frameworks and the requirement for dual-use lists. The morning of third and final day of the workshop was reserved for informal bilateral meetings and further discussions as required.

The event presented a valuable opportunity to enhance awareness of States' obligations under resolution 1540 (2004), as well as the Committee's assistance mechanism and other tools to support national implementation. Participants were briefed about the obligations, specifically under Operative Paragraphs 1, 2, and 3(a), (b), (c) & (d). Differences in scope, objectives and application of the different international instruments, including the BWC, were discussed, as well as the complementary nature of resolution 1540 (2004) and overlaps with provisions under the BWC. Participants also had the opportunity to exchange information on some of the challenges experienced in the process of adopting measures pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), and in particular the implementation of export control of related materials, as well as lessons learnt with regard to the effective implementation of their respective national instruments. Additionally, the participants were given instruction on the appropriate options for requesting assistance from the 1540 Committee. There was also discussion regarding the need to provide to the Committee pertinent information related to their State's status regarding measures relevant to national implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) through national reports.

On the 14th March a meeting was held with senior officials of the Australian Government in Canberra. This was a joint meeting with BWC-ISU to brief Australian Government senior officials from various departments, (including the Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Department of Defence (DoD) who have overall responsibility for Australia's export controls, and Australia Border Force (ABF) who lead on regional capacity building in regard to border security), about both the regional implementation of the BWC and also resolution 1540. The briefing was a

shortened version of the presentation given during the workshop. In addition, a sperate short informal 1540 meeting was held with the First Assistant Secretary, International Security Division, DFAT to introduce resolution 1540 (2004) and discuss Australia's continuing offer of assistance.

Additional Comments

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