

Information Note¹

- Event:** *Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) Meeting of States Parties (MSP) side event on “Developments in science and technology”*
- Organizers:** University of Bath, Biochemical Security 2030 Project (UK)
- Date and venue:** 9 December 2013, Geneva, Switzerland
- Participants:** Representatives of the BWC States Parties; representatives of the scientific, professional, commercial, academic, and other non-governmental organizations registered as participants in the BWC Meeting of States Parties

1. Objectives of the BWC MSP side event

To facilitate discussions of States Parties on the BWC inter-sessional topics (i.e. the Standing Agenda item on the *Review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention*) by providing updates on the current status and challenges of developments in science and technology specifically related to strengthening national biological risk management.

2. Background

The side event on “*Developments in Science and Technology: Strengthening National Biological Risk Management*” was coordinated by the University of Bath, Biochemical Security 2030 Project and was chaired by Ambassador Serhiy Komisarenko of Ukraine.

3. Highlights

Dr. Brett Edwards, University of Bath, presented on ‘*Ensuring regime responsiveness to developments in science and technology*’; he introduced the Biochemical Security 2030 project which aims to explore the governance of bio-chemical security, in particular the idea that it cannot rely exclusively on top down measures agreed upon at the international level but also complementary efforts by those at the forefront of research in biology, chemistry and associated sciences- whose perceptions of science and technology (S&T) and its implications for defense and security can be expected to vary from those in government or academic security studies. The project on Biochemical Security 2030 also aims to contribute inter alia to the process of S&T review by BWC States Parties by distributing a series of briefing papers at the BWC and CWC meetings of States Parties, establishing a “security governance network”, and maintaining a website (<http://biochemsec2030.org>) for outreach and sharing of information including through social networking tools such as blogs and mini-blogs (i.e. twitter). For more information about this project, please see Information Note at:

<http://www.un.org/en/sc/1540/pdf/Information%20Note%20Bath%20BioChemSecurity%202013-56.pdf> . At the BWC MSP, the Project coordinators distributed two papers (by Professor Kathryn Nixdorff on “*The 2013 Meeting of Experts to the BWC, with a focus on the standing agenda item review of science and technology developments*” and by Dr. Catherine Jefferson on “*The growth of amateur biology*” a dual use

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governance challenge?”), respectively) as well as an advance copy by Dr. Michael Crowley (University of Bradford, UK) and Dr. Dana Perkins (1540 Committee expert) called “*Beyond the horizon: ‘wide area’ riot control agents means of delivery and their significance to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and UNSCR 1540*”.

Dr. Jonathan Forman (OPCW) presented on ‘Chemical weapons disarmament in a technologically evolving world’; he discussed the potential S&T Concerns for CWC (i.e. potential new routes to toxic chemicals; potential new delivery methods for CW; opportunities to disguise banned activities) and summarized the SAB report for the CWC Third Review Conference (available online at: http://www.opcw.org/index.php?eID=dam_frontend_push&docID=15865).

Dr. Alemka Markotic, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, presented on the recent workshop organized by the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, US National Academy of Sciences, UK Royal Society, International Union of Microbiological Societies, on *Science Needs for Microbial Forensics: Developing an International Roadmap*, 14-16 October, 2013, Zagreb, Croatia. The workshop aimed to increase awareness among the international scientific community of the importance of microbial forensics and the need for increased scientific efforts to provide the knowledge that will make microbial forensics an effective tool. For more information about this project, please see Information Note at: <http://www.un.org/en/sc/1540/pdf/Information%20Note%20Zagreb%20Microbial%20Meeting%202013-63.pdf>

Dr. Gerald Walther, University of Bradford, discussed the ‘The 2013 BioWeapons Monitor: launch and plans for the future’. The 2013 BioWeapons Monitor (<http://www.bwpp.org>) is a civil society initiative to track compliance with BWC and other international treaties that codify the norm against biological weapons, relevant scientific and technological developments, and measures undertaken by governments and relevant organizations to increase openness and transparency. It is an online searchable database with open-source information on topics such as: international accords controlling biological weapons; compliance with the prohibitions contained in the BWC and the 1925 Geneva Protocol; compliance with obligations to increase openness such as confidence-building measures under the BWC; relevant developments in specific regions or countries; policies by governments and other entities to reinforce the norm against the weaponization of disease; scientific and technological developments related to the threat of biological weapons; openness and transparency in dual-use capabilities; and initiatives by non-governmental organizations to strengthen the norm against biological weapons. The BioWeapons Monitor 2013 contains country reports on BWC-relevant activities of eight States Parties: Argentina, Germany, India, Japan, Kenya, Philippines, South Africa, and Switzerland. An initiative to change the name of the BioWeapons Monitor to the Biosecurity Monitor was also announced.

The 1540 Committee expert, presented on “*UN Security Council Resolution 1540: Emerging Trends, Sharing of Experiences, Lessons Learned and Effective Practices*”. She discussed the role of S&T in States’ efforts at establishing appropriate domestic controls over chemical and biological weapons (CBW)- related materials, equipment and technology, using three examples (“wide area” riot control agents means of delivery; the H5N1 ‘gain of function’ research export controls; and the voluntary prepublication control and withholding of specific information from publication on the newly discovered botulinum neurotoxin type H, , respectively). She argued for the value of sharing of experiences, lessons learned and effective practices in national implementation measures of broadly defined obligations of international treaties, conventions or regulations in order to increase the effectiveness of the CBW non-proliferation regimes including resolution 1540 (2004).

The audience participated in discussions related to the relevance of monitoring S&T developments and the importance of education and outreach (as well as sharing such national experience in reports to the

1540 Committee). Participants also discussed several opportunities to bring the outcome of recommendations from the side events to the attention of the BWC States Parties.

4. **Additional comments**

For further information, please contact the 1540 Committee's Group of Experts by e-mail at 1540experts@un.org.