

## Information Note<sup>1</sup>

- Event:** *Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) Meeting of States Parties (MSP) side event on “Monitoring compliance relevant data - Launch of the Hamburg Research Group's trade monitoring website”*
- Organizers:** University of Hamburg, Research Group for Biological Arms Control (Germany)
- Date and venue:** 12 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 launch the trade monitoring website of the University of Hamburg, Research Group for Biological Arms Control.

### 2. **Background**

The Research Group for Biological Arms Control at the University of Hamburg aims to contribute, through innovative research and outreach activities, to the universal prevention of BW development, production and use. Since August 2006, the Research Group is part of the Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker Centre for Science and Peace Research (<http://www.znf.uni-hamburg.de/>). Ambassador Michael Biontino (Germany) provided opening remarks at the side event on *Monitoring compliance relevant data - Launch of the Hamburg Research Group's trade monitoring website*.

### 3. **Highlights**

The project was introduced by Dr. Gunnar Jeremias (University of Hamburg, Germany) who discussed the trends and data analysis of the global trade of biological culture media. His project uses data from the declarations for imports and exports by national customs authorities. In order to identify the quantity of trade of biological culture media, it refers to the portion of the national customs declaration where the description of items is enumerated based on the classification system within the World Customs Organization's Harmonized System (HS). In particular, data used includes commodities under code 382100: “Prepared culture media for the development of micro-organisms”, which encompasses simple bulk media for mass production that are traded in large amounts for low prices to media for the development of specific strains that are traded in small amounts for high prices (not covered is Agar, HS 130231). The aforementioned data that is being used for this website is publicly available from the COMTRADE database of the UN Statistics Division. Dr. Thomas Reinhold (University of Hamburg, Germany) provided an overview of the project website: <http://www.biological-arms-control.org/monitor/>

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<sup>1</sup> 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 1540 Committee expert discussed the relevance of such civil society initiatives in the context of the obligation set forth by resolution 1540 (2004) to implement and enforce appropriate controls over BW-related materials focusing in particular on those controls aiming to detect, deter, prevent and combat the illicit trafficking and brokering through effective border control and enforcement efforts. She noted that development and improvement of technical microbial forensics methods and effective cooperation in law enforcement and information / intelligence sharing to detect illicit trafficking of biological materials outside of regulatory control, and to prevent and respond to biosecurity events, implicitly strengthen the implementation and enforcement of resolution 1540 (2004). In addition, monitoring S&T developments and trends is significant in the context of implementing resolution 1540 (2004) as the resolution complements and reinforces BWC and the Security Council called upon all States to promote its universal adoption and full implementation of multilateral non-proliferation treaties to which they are parties, and strengthen them if necessary. The 1540 Committee expert noted that S&T advances and civil society initiatives may also lead to innovative approaches to arms control, verification and compliance monitoring in order to address future needs of the biological (and chemical) weapons non-proliferation regime. She compared the data monitored on the Hamburg Research Group's trade monitoring website with data analyzed by UNSCOM in Iraq, specifically referring to the interview given by Ambassador Rolf Ekeus (former UNSCOM Executive Chair) to Arms Control Today (<http://www.armscontrol.org/print/216>).

The comments and questions from the audience highlighted the relevance of such civil society initiatives to BWC compliance monitoring and the need to expand and complement the data on growth media trade with other sources of information.

#### 4. **Additional comments**

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