

Friday 14th December 2007

The Fourth Day: Drawing towards a conclusion

Industry Panel

The 2007 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) for the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC/BWC) continued on Thursday starting with a panel composed of people connected with the biological industries in an open session while the formal Meeting was suspended. This gave the session the same sort of status that the NGO roundtable had at the beginning of the week, although this panel was not preceded by strong caveats.

The panel, each of whom was speaking in their personal capacity, was composed of: Terence Taylor, Director, International Council for the Life Sciences; Leila Oda, President, National Biosafety Association of Brazil; Heinz Schwer, Chief Executive Officer, Sloning BioTechnology; and Rainer Wessel, Chief Executive Officer, Ganymed Pharmaceuticals. Some of the panellists also had strong connections with industry associations. Each gave a short introduction on their perspectives on issues relevant to the topics under discussion in the Meeting. There then followed a lively question and answer session, much of which also included biosecurity and awareness-raising topics that are to be discussed at next year's meetings. There was also some discussion on how industry and academia should be involved in the coming meetings, with some suggestions of greater involvement such as had happened at the 2005 Meetings at which awareness-raising and codes of conduct were last discussed.

Working sessions

After the industry panel, the meeting moved into another closed 'working session' which started with some additional presentations on the national implementation and regional cooperation topics. After a short break, draft texts of the final report were circulated. As has happened before, the report was circulated in two parts. The first is procedural and uncontroversial. The second covers the substantive/policy issues. Unlike earlier MSPs, the substantive part seems to be raising little concern. Most delegates spoken with for this *MSP report* indicated they were comfortable overall with what has been suggested. The two states parties that have most often raised significant objections to final report drafts – Iran and the USA – both seem broadly content although it is likely each will want to suggest some changes to the language used.

Working Papers

Eight Working Papers have so far been circulated within the Meeting. All are short, with most being only a few pages long.

- WP.1 – 'The BTWC and Bioincident and Biocrime Database', Germany, 7 December, 2 pp.
- WP.2 – 'Legal Implementation and Enforcement', Germany (for EU), 7 December, 4 pp.

- WP.3 – ‘Supporting the BTWC Implementation Support Unit’, Netherlands (for EU), 7 December, 3 pp.
- WP.4 – ‘La Soumission des Mesures de Confiance (MDC)’ [The submission of Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs)], France (for EU), 7 December, 5 pp.
- WP.5 – ‘Assistance and Cooperation in the Framework of the Implementation and Universalization of the BTWC’, Portugal (for EU), 10 December, 5 pp.
- WP.6 – ‘Assistance activities for Implementing BTWC Legislation in Peru’, Portugal (for EU and Peru), 10 December, 3 pp.
- WP.7 – ‘Brazil’s National Program for the Promotion of Dialogue Between the Private Sector and the Government in Matters Related to Sensitive Assets (Pronabens)’, Brazil, 11 December, 3 pp.
- WP.8 – ‘Nigerian Experience of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention’, Nigeria, 13 December, 5 pp.

WP.1 illustrates a concern that quantitative analysis of certain types of biological incidents may not help implementation of the BTWC as any counting of natural outbreaks and hoax threats in circumstances where they are not evaluated as not a biological weapons threat can be misleading. This is a national paper, rather than one on behalf of the EU.

WP.2-6 are all from the EU and are mostly self-explanatory from their titles. The first of these discusses what might be included in effective national implementation arrangements. The second is the paper discussed in the earlier controversies with the EU (see *MSP report #2*). The third examines the new CBM handling arrangements through the ISU and notes that there has been a record number of CBM returns in 2007. The fifth relates to the EU Joint Action and describes the forms of assistance that the EU may give to states in implementation of the Convention. The paper also describes efforts under the Joint Action to bring new states into the Convention. The last of the EU papers, prepared with Peru, describes the work of a ‘Technical Assistance Visit’ to that country by four experts from the EU in the August 2007.

WP.7 describes the work of the Brazilian agency Pronabens, which has been taking a particular focus on raising awareness within that country’s industry and academic community of international obligations in the biological field.

WP.8 describes Nigeria’s experiences in its efforts to enhance its national implementation of the Convention.

A text has been agreed for a NAM Working Paper which lists ‘concrete actions’ which include national implementation across the whole of the BTWC, including Article X on technical co-operation. This paper will appear in the above series.

Side Event

Thursday’s lunchtime seminar, entitled ‘Running Multi-jurisdictional Bioterrorism Exercises: the Federal Response Planning Experience in Canada’, was convened by the Canadian mission. Steven Jones, Director of the Laboratory Response to Bioterrorism, National Microbiology Laboratory, Public Health Agency of Canada presented some experiences of a recent exercise, the results of which are currently being reviewed. Canada has indicated that any public report resulting from this review will be made available to the ISU for distribution to interested states parties. A press release on the exercise can be found at <<<http://www.jibc.ca/images/nationaldefense/pressRelease.pdf>>>.

This is the fifth report from the Meeting of States Parties for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention which is being held from 10 to 14 December 2007 in Geneva. The reports are designed to help people who are not in Geneva to follow the proceedings.

The reports are prepared by Richard Guthrie on behalf of the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP). Copies of all of these reports (and details of how to subscribe to them by e-mail) are available on the BWPP website at <<<http://www.bwpp.org/2007MSP/MSP2007Resources.html>>>.

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