

Fourth Meeting

Geneva, 10-14 December 2007

Item 8 of the agenda

**Reports from the Chairman and States Parties
on universalization activities**

**ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE
IMPLEMENTATION AND UNIVERSALISATION OF THE BTWC**

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Introduction

1. On several occasions in the past, States Parties to the BTWC affirmed the importance of cooperation and the provision of technical assistance in respect of national implementing legislation. During the last intersessional period, States Parties in need were called on to contact those offering assistance in the meetings of 2003, 2004 (improvement of disease surveillance and outbreak response) and 2005 (codes of conduct).

2. Last year the EU agreed on a Joint Action (2006/184/CFSP) in support of BTWC with the objectives of promoting comprehensive implementation in third countries and universalisation of the Convention. The EU Joint Action seeks to promote two major objectives: first to increase the membership of the BTWC, and secondly to assist States Parties to transpose the obligations of the BTWC into appropriate national legislation and administrative measures. The Joint Action is extended throughout 2008.

3. The initiatives in the field of assistance and cooperation regarding implementation and/or universalisation of the BTWC, whether taken at a bilateral or multilateral level (through the organisation of seminars), demand a coordinated and concerted approach. The fundamental aim is to avoid any overlap between activities of States, international organisations, and non-governmental organisations, and try to coordinate them in order to complement and reinforce each other.

Assistance and cooperation on national implementation

4. One of the main goals of the EU JA is to assist States Parties in the development of national implementing legislation. This objective is pursued through the provision of technical assistance in drafting the necessary legislation including appropriate penal provisions, and

administrative measures required for the full national implementation of the Convention. This assistance has been channelled either through an internet-based Information and Collaboration System (ICMS) or through technical assistance visits (TAV).

5. The objectives of the visits by experts focus on on-site assistance to States in their BWC implementation, in particular through helping to develop legislation, by making available relevant experience and information from EU Member States, and to provide political support to the internal processes of preparing for full BWC implementation.

6. So far, one technical assistance visit has been carried out. The extension of the current Joint Action through 2008 will allow the EU to organise more visits.

7. On 27-29 August 2007 the EU organised a technical assistance visit to Peru. The TAV included a seminar on BWC implementation requirements; a drafting session to review Peru's draft BWC implementing legislation; and a series of high-level bilateral meetings with key ministries (Justice, Defence, Production and Health). Details will be provided in a Peru/EU joint working paper.

8. As affirmed by the EU in the 6th BTWC Review Conference (BWC/CONF.VI/WP.2), the compilation of a catalogue of practices already implemented and proven by States Parties, worked out on the basis of existing national measures, would facilitate any assistance on both the provider and recipient side.

Universalization

9. The second main objective of the EU Joint Action 2006/184/CFSP in support of BTWC is to increase the membership to the Convention. This objective is pursued through the organisation of regional workshops. In 2006/2007, the EU organised workshops in Kenya, Thailand, Costa Rica and Senegal. A fifth seminar is due to take place in the Middle East.

10. Representatives of several States participating on the regional workshops expressed the need for support in convincing their national key stakeholders of the importance of the BTWC. Creating interest in the Convention may be achievable when linked with assistance in improving public health infrastructure, e.g. the development of local diagnostic and treatment capacities to deal with natural as well as unusual outbreaks of disease, or with technical assistance in capacity building for customs and immigration.

11. In order to increase the number of States Parties to the Convention, a focused approach should be considered. Every State non-party to the Convention should be evaluated, specifically as regards the reasons and problems related with the ratification of or the accession to the BTWC. Such an overall assessment of the situation would facilitate assistance to States, taking into account their constitutional processes, in particular through:

- (i) Juridical support in the process of ratification or accession (juridical support);
- (ii) Information-sharing on the implications of ratification of or access to the Convention;
- (iii) Support in building national capacities necessary to implement the Convention.

12. Taking into account that assistance in improving national public health capacities may ease States' deliberations to join the BTWC and/or to implement legislation, the EU plans a Joint Action in support of the WHO activities in the area of bio-safety and bio-security. The implementation of this Joint Action will start in 2008. Two types of activities are envisaged:

- (i) Awareness raising, training and networking activities in the national, sub-regional and regional context (workshops foreseen in sub-Saharan Africa, South America, South and Southeast Asia, East Asia/Western Pacific, Central Asia and Eastern European countries including Russia) aiming at a deeper understanding of bio-risk reduction practices and their effective implementation in laboratories and other facilities.
 - (ii) Country-specific technical assistance to develop and implement a bio-risk reduction management plan, particularly concerning laboratory practice and safety, and to harmonise it with integrated national preparedness plans, and to strengthen the performance and sustainability of national laboratories by connecting them with regional and international networks.
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