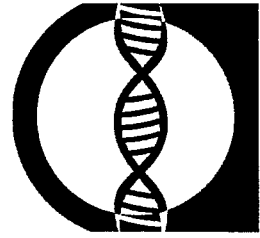


**Research Group for
Biological Arms Control**



Statement by the
Research Group for Biological Arms Control
at the University of Hamburg, Germany

to the Meeting of the States Parties to the
Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I am making this statement on behalf of the Research Group for Biological Arms Control at the University of Hamburg, Germany. The mission of our Research Group is to contribute to the universal prevention of the development, production and use of biological weapons. The development of new verification and compliance strategies and concepts and concrete verification measures is our core research area.

We are gathering here for the first meeting of States Parties after the Sixth Review Conference, and we would like to take the opportunity to address two issues that have come about as a result of the last Review Conference, first, the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and second, the general approach of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).

At the Sixth Review Conference, States decided to establish the Implementation Support Unit, which was assigned among other things to undertake all matters related to the CBMs, including collection, some very basic analyses, distribution via a secure website, and serving as a contact point for assistance related to the preparation of the CBMs. The CBM regime can benefit enormously from the attention of the Implementation Support Unit. One early indication is the highest number ever of CBM submissions collected this year. However, at the Sixth Review Conference no decision was taken to review the content of the CBMs, neither at the Conference nor during the intersessional process between 2007 and 2010, despite there being a necessity for CBM reform. Furthermore, States Parties decided to limit the availability of the CBMs by stipulating that information supplied by a State Party must not be circulated or made available beyond States Parties and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs without the express permission of the submitting State Party. This decision further limits the possibility of independent assessment of the CBMs by civil society.

Civil society organisations have carried out a number of studies with the aim of assessing the CBM data. Our Research Group's latest assessment concerns CBM Form B on unusual outbreaks of diseases. It is available in a draft form from us here at the Conference and will be printed and distributed before the end of the year. This assessment demonstrates that States Parties have different understandings of what is required under CBM Form B (i) in terms of background information on disease outbreak. Many declarations are incomplete, inaccurate or simply missing. The assessment also illustrates that there is a lack of reliable comprehensive and global disease case number statistics. In addition, the study shows how the loosely defined term "unusual outbreak" introduces ambiguity as to the scope of CBM Form B (ii), the purpose of which is to indicate illicit uses of biological material. This ambiguity has led to the declaration of low relevance incidents on the one hand, while on the other hand, a relevant event like the anthrax letter attacks of 2001 went unreported. We believe, efforts should be made to enlarge the coverage of WHO mechanisms instead of trying to develop a separate mechanism for routine disease data collection under the BWC. CBM Form B should be a forum to inform states about serious biosecurity related events such as alleged bioweapon attacks or biodefence laboratory accidents only.

Contrasting the new restrictions on the availability of the CBMs, fourteen states have made their CBM submissions available to the public in the past two years supporting efforts to increase transparency around dual use activities. These States Parties are nine EU states including Germany and the United Kingdom, Australia, Croatia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Switzerland. Information contained in these publicly available CBMs is summarized in our CBM Reader, which is available at the door.

The second topic we would like to address is the low expectations of what is achievable in the framework of the BWC. One indication of these low expectations is the fact, that the Sixth Review Conference was generally hailed as a success. It is true, that a complete review was carried out, that several concrete decisions were taken, most notably the establishment of the ISU, and that the intersessional process will continue. However, if one takes a somewhat more critical look, there is little reason for rejoicing.

The comprehensive review, in fact, produced little tangible headway. A lot of text was copied from the Final Document of the Fourth Review Conference. Most importantly, there was no progress on the important mechanisms under Articles V and VI of the BWC such as the consultative meeting and challenge investigations, or on the issue of verification. The decision to establish the ISU was a big step forward. However, its tasks are very limited, in particular because the action plans on universality, national implementation and implementation of Article X could not be agreed. The ISU's existence, furthermore, is dependent on the political climate in 2011, when a decision on its future will be made. Finally, the intersessional process is weaker than the previous one. Instead of a two week meeting of experts each year, there is now a one week meeting. Moreover, the topics on the agenda have largely been discussed previously. And there is still no willingness to adopt mandatory recommendations or take binding decisions.

In general, biological weapons control efforts, whether directed at states or at terrorists, will only be sustainable and globally effective in the long run, if there is a minimum of internationally agreed rules on what constitutes effective implementation of the BWC.

I thank you for your attention!
