

Monday 27th November 2006

## End of the first week: the Conference takes shape

The fifth day of the Sixth Review Conference for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) spent most of the time on thematic discussions, although there was a brief session of the Committee of the Whole (CoW), the circulation of a number of papers and an additional session of the general debate. Thematic discussions and the CoW are both carried out behind closed doors.

### **Conference Room activities**

Friday morning started with a brief session of the CoW, which is carrying out an article-by-article review of the Convention. This session was convened in order to receive further submissions of suggested text for the Review Conference final declaration. The group of BTWC non-aligned (NAM) States circulated a working paper containing text relating to Article X issues. [This article concerns peaceful uses of the sciences covered by the Convention. See <http://www.bwpp.org/6RevCon/documents/BTWCFullText.pdf> for the full text of the BTWC.] It is not clear whether the NAM paper will appear later as a formal working paper of the Review Conference or whether it will be considered only as a conference room paper.

India circulated to States Parties a paper including suggested text relating to each of the articles of the Convention for the article-by-article section of the Review Conference final declaration. Notable in the Indian text was the inclusion of text describing the considerations for each of the topics examined in the 2003-05 inter-sessional process. This was the first substantial proposal of text, other than for Article X, by a non-western State at the Review Conference. Other States submitting suggested text on Friday were China, Finland (on behalf of the EU) and the USA.

After the CoW, the Conference went into informal plenary for a thematic discussion on Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs). CBMs are a transparency measure involving annual declarations of significant facilities and events such as outbreaks of particular diseases. The numbers of CBM returns are widely recognized to be low and the Review Conference is expected to take some steps, possibly including CBMs as an issue in an inter-sessional work programme, to increase participation.

### **Documents**

On Friday afternoon, the President of the Review Conference, Ambassador Masood Khan (Pakistan), circulated to States Parties an informal paper including text of a draft final declaration. This paper contains a footnote indicating it is 'meant to stimulate discussion and focus negotiation' and was issued at about the same time as the conference secretariat

circulated a compilation of all of the proposed language that had been submitted to the CoW for its article-by-article review.

### *Working Papers*

Nineteen working papers had been submitted to the Review Conference before it opened (see Report #1 for details). Additional Working Papers that had been made available as official documents during the first week were: WP.20, 'New Inter-Sessional Process' (This paper was circulated with no attribution); WP.21, 'Confidence-Building Measures' (South Africa); WP.22, 'Bioterrorism' (Italy, on behalf of the EU); WP.23, 'Codes of Conduct for Scientists' (UK, as a national paper); WP.24, 'Article X of the Convention' (Iran); WP.25, 'Prohibition of Use of Biological Weapons' (Iran); WP.26, 'Preliminary Comments on Article I of the Convention' (BTWC NAM states); WP.27, 'Confronting Noncompliance with the Biological Weapons Convention' (USA); and WP.28, 'United States Progress on 2003-2005 Work Program Topics' (USA). [Copies of these papers are available on the UN official documents server at <<http://documents.un.org>> – put 'BWC' in the 'symbol' field of the 'simple search' interface.]

### **Reflections on the first week of the Review Conference**

Much of the discussion around the Review Conference has revolved around what would be included in the contents of a new inter-sessional work programme. This is a departure from what many analysts expected – it was widely assumed that the question of whether there would be a future inter-sessional work programme at all would be the subject of much discussion at the Review Conference. However, there appears to be a firm consensus that such a new programme should be pursued.

The role of central arrangements for implementation support also appears to have been the subject of an unexpected early consensus. Barely a few weeks ago there were indications that the creation of any form of central support mechanism would be resisted by a number of States Parties, the most notable of which was the United States. Now it seems there is a growing consensus that a small implementation support unit may be agreed as part of an overall package of measures relating to a new inter-sessional work programme.

The suggested texts currently on the table for the final declaration are broadly compatible. However, most of this text comes from western States which might be expected to have similar views on the issues of concern. It is not yet clear whether the lack of other suggested texts stems from agreement with what has already been proposed or whether further proposals are to be expected.

### **NGO activities**

Friday's lunchtime seminar was convened by the Chemical and Biological Security Project at the Center for Science and International Security (CSIS), based in Washington, DC, to launch a new publication 'The Biological Weapons Threat and Nonproliferation Options: a survey of senior U.S. decision makers and policy shapers'. Further information about the project can be found at <<http://www.csis.org/isp/cbsp/>>.

*This is the sixth report from the Sixth five-yearly Review Conference for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention which is being held from 20 November to 8 December 2006 in Geneva. The reports are prepared by Richard Guthrie on behalf of the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP).*

*These reports are available on the BWPP website via a page dedicated to the Review Conference – <<http://www.bwpp.org/6RevCon/6thRevConResources.html>>. Details of how to subscribe to the reports via e-mail are included there.*

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