

Friday 8th December 2006

## Final issues of concern: The end-game is played out

Thursday, the fourteenth day of the Sixth Review Conference for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), saw an end-game being played out that is fairly typical for this sort of event. Two sessions of informal plenaries were held which resolved a large proportion of the outstanding textual questions. Although most text is now agreed, there remain a few significant matters to be resolved upon which only two States Parties – Iran and the USA – have indicated strong views. Therefore, at the end of the day, consultations were being held between the President of the Review Conference, Ambassador Masood Khan (Pakistan) and a small number of States Parties about outstanding issues. Depending on what form of outcome may result from these consultations, there will be additional consequences for text in the final declaration.

Two versions of the draft declaration were circulated to States Parties during the day by the President – one in the morning and one in the afternoon. At each stage there have been reductions of highlighted – mostly bolded – text [i.e., text that has yet to be agreed]. A draft text for the final procedural report, which essentially describes the process of the Review Conference was also circulated.

### **Two action plans or no action plans?**

The subject of the content of one of the action plans remains the most controversial issue of the Review Conference. The proposed action plan on comprehensive implementation combines elements of the earlier proposals for an action plan on national implementation and on implementation of Article X of the Convention (which relates to peaceful uses of the biological sciences).

Following the divergence of views on the proposed action plan on comprehensive implementation, there is the possibility that this action plan might be dropped, although it is not clear how likely this is. In preparation for this possibility, the action plan on universality has been re-titled ‘Promotion of Universalisation’. If agreement on the other action plan is reached, this may return to its original title.

### **The future inter-sessional process**

Some work remains to be done on the list of topics for individual Meetings of Experts and Meetings of States Parties – the inter-sessional meetings. The final text for this list will be dependent on the results of the President’s consultations on Thursday night.

The list of possible recurring topics that the inter-sessional meetings could cover has essentially been struck out. The list of topics that would have been open for discussion at each year's Meeting of States Parties – universality, national implementation, scientific and technological developments, confidence-building measures (CBMs), and coordination with other international bodies – was replaced with the words 'universalisation and comprehensive implementation of the Convention'. In the afternoon draft text these words remained in bold and may change if a solution is found to the action plans issues.

### **Implementation Support Unit**

As disagreements surfaced on a number of matters, these had knock-on effects for text relating to the Implementation Support Unit (ISU). Phrasing about national implementation and universalisation had been included in reference to the proposed action plans. These had been changed to comprehensive implementation and universalisation in the morning's draft. In the afternoon's draft, both had been deleted. This text may be reinserted if action plans on these subjects are agreed. If there is no such agreement, the role of the ISU will be limited to administrative support and dealing with CBMs.

The bolding was removed from the word 'three' in relation to staff numbers; there does not appear to have been any other proposal for numbers for some time.

### **Confidence-Building Measures**

There was some opposition to the idea that the ISU should be able to send reminders to States Parties that had not submitted CBMs by the due date (15 April each year). The argument by Algeria was that such reminders should only be sent for something that was legally binding and this was not the case for CBMs. Reminders before the deadline were also contentious. Instead, the ISU will inform States Parties of the deadline at least three months in advance. The deadline has not been changed since CBMs were introduced.

The section on CBMs has now dropped the suggestion that formats for submissions should be reviewed. The relevant paragraph now reads that the CBMs system 'further and comprehensive attention' at the seventh Review Conference to be held in 2011.

### **Final reporting**

A final daily report on the Review Conference will be published by BWPP over the weekend to cover the events of the final day.

On a personal note, as this will be the last daily report circulated directly to delegates in Geneva, I would like to thank all those members of delegations who have taken time to discuss the serious matters involved in this Review Conference. With so many meetings taking place behind closed doors, reporting on the events would have otherwise been impossible.

*This is the fifteenth 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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