

Wednesday 9th December 2009

## The Second Day: cooperation and challenges

The 2009 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) continued on Tuesday as part of the second inter-sessional process for the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC). The Meeting was chaired by Ambassador Grinius of Canada.

The Programme of Work adopted on Monday had the subjects 'Aims' and 'Addressing problems, challenges, needs and restrictions' listed for discussion on the topic of capacity building in disease surveillance for the morning and afternoon respectively. However, both of these subjects were dealt with on Tuesday morning, and so Wednesday morning's subject, 'Developing mechanisms for building capacity', was brought forward to Tuesday afternoon.

There was considerable overlap between these sessions. Some countries spoke more than once in each session and some of these short interventions were the most informative. Some countries, such as Armenia and Kenya, took the floor for the first time in this MSP. In drawing out the themes in the analysis below, interventions are not listed in chronological order but are selected to illustrate the perspectives being expressed. Working Papers referred to will be available via the official BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) website <<http://www.unog.ch/bwc>> in due course.

### **Aims**

Cuba, speaking in a national capacity, reminded participants that the use of the term 'disease' in the mandate for this meeting did not simply cover human diseases, but also those affecting animals and plants; and offered a further reminder that this mandate did not cover all of Article X, a reminder that the Chair remarked upon as being useful. Iran described Article X as one of the pillars of the Convention and said it needed to be thoroughly reviewed. The United States said that any review of Article X should be part of a review of the whole Convention and that is the job for the five-yearly Review Conferences. India said Article X cannot be seen in isolation and that the Convention must be regarded in a holistic manner.

### **Addressing problems, challenges, needs and restrictions**

The balance between the obligations under the BWC for each State Party to ensure it does not assist others in the acquisition of biological weapons [Article III] while at the same time to ensure 'the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the use of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins for peaceful purposes' [Article X.1] was the subject of much discussion. Iran said that peaceful activities were being hindered by restrictions on transfers of reference samples that were needed to calibrate equipment vital for legitimate research. The UK argued that 'good faith' implementation of Article III obligations was not a restriction. Pakistan suggested that Article X lacked focus in the BWC process. The UK described the debate on an Article X mechanism as 'sterile', to which India responded it was sterile as there was no proper forum for dialogue on this issue.

The USA suggested that a challenge not specifically mentioned in the Synthesis Paper was that potential assistance providers did not always understand what was needed by possible recipients. Germany pointed out that some thousands of students from developing countries were studying in German universities. The UK highlighted its financial support for the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi). Iran highlighted technical assistance it had provided (WP.7). India presented some of its experiences as both a supplier and receiver of assistance (WP.8).

### **Developing mechanisms for building capacity**

Many of the discussions on mechanisms related to Working Papers either submitted or due to be submitted. The Cuba/NAM paper (WP.2) on establishment of a formal Article X implementation mechanism was referred to a number of times. Sweden (for the EU) described work done to develop a common format for reporting assistance opportunities (WP.6). Japan (for the JACKSNNZ) described four 'pillars' of international co-operation (WP.3).

### **The mystery visitor**

The Russian Foreign Ministry announced this week: 'The second meeting of the Russian-American Presidential Commission's working group on arms control and international security was held in Moscow on December 7 under the chairmanship of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Ryabkov and US Under Secretary of State Ellen Tauscher'. This information, taken together with the widely reported US-Russian consultations in Geneva on how to make arrangements to compensate for the expiry of the START I Treaty last weekend while a new treaty might be negotiated, puts a possible visit to the MSP in a new light. In co-chairing the Commission meeting in Moscow, Ellen Tauscher would be essentially acting as the President's personal representative. It would be therefore highly unlikely she could be in Geneva and take time away from any nuclear consultations unless this was with the explicit approval of President Obama himself.

It is known that President Obama and his closest advisers have taken an interest in issues of biological threats. In his foreign policy speech in Chicago on 16 July 2008 during the US presidential election, candidate Obama stated 'it's time for a comprehensive effort to tackle bioterror. ... As President, I will launch an effort across our government to stay ahead of this threat. To prevent bioterrorism, we need to invest in our analysis, enhance our information-sharing, and give our intelligence agencies the capacity to identify and interdict dangerous bio-weapons around the world'. A factsheet issued by the Obama campaign (available as a PDF file from <<http://tinyurl.com/C21-threats-pdf>>) noted that the USA should 'Lead an international effort to diminish impact of major infectious disease epidemics' and that, if elected, the candidate would 'work with the international community to make any use of disease as a weapon declared a crime against humanity'.

### **Side events**

A lunchtime seminar was held by the European Union to launch a guide to help States Parties produce returns under the BWC system of Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs). The guide was funded under an EU Joint Action. The issues were introduced by Andreas Strub (EU Council General Secretariat) and Ambassador Grinius. Richard Lennane (ISU) described the guide in detail. The launch was chaired by Ambassador Magnus Hellgren (Sweden). Electronic copies of the guide are available via the ISU website.

*This is the third report from the Meeting of States Parties for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention which is being held from 7 to 11 December 2009 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) in co-operation with the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC). Copies are available via <<http://www.bwpp.org/reports.html>>.*

*For questions during the Meeting of States Parties relating to these reports, please contact Richard Guthrie (+41 76 507 1026 or <[richard@cbw-events.org.uk](mailto:richard@cbw-events.org.uk)>).*