

**Ninth Review Conference of the States Parties  
to the Convention on the Prohibition of the  
Development, Production and Stockpiling  
of Bacteriological (Biological) and  
Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction**

14 November 2022

English only

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Geneva, 28 November to 16 December 2022

Item 11 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of issues identified in the review of the operation of  
the Convention as provided for in its Article XII and any possible  
consensus follow-up action**

**“Strengthening the Capacity of Biological Weapons  
Convention National Contact Points in Southeast Asia”:  
Final Project Report**

**Submitted by Japan**

**I. Introduction**

1. Japan is a strong supporter of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and attaches particular importance to the implementation of all articles of the Convention. Japan wished to contribute actively to the 2018-2020 BWC intersessional programme, most notably towards strengthening the capacity of BWC National Contact Points (NCPs) in Southeast Asia, as well as supporting States Parties in the region to submit their Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs). Hence, in 2018 Japan provided a voluntary contribution of USD 80,000 to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for a project on “Training of BWC National Contact Points in Southeast Asia”. This project was implemented in two phases.

2. As already described in BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/WP.1, in December 2019, the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) initiated preparations for Phase I of the project, namely the initial NCP training workshop. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic the workshop had to be postponed. Acknowledging the importance of not losing momentum, Japan and the ISU explored alternative options and agreed to develop and conduct an online training course for the BWC NCPs in Southeast Asia. The course was intended to adapt to the constraints imposed by the pandemic while retaining as many as possible of the original objectives of the workshop. The course demonstrated that online training can be an effective tool and that, due to reduced costs, it could actually increase the number of training opportunities available to States Parties.

3. NCPs from eight Southeast Asian States Parties participated in the two-week online training course, which took place from 22 September to 1 October 2020, and was the first online capacity-building course to be developed and delivered by the ISU. The outcome and practical lessons learned from the online course were submitted by Japan as a working paper to the 2020 Meeting of Experts on Strengthening National Implementation.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the online training, participants concluded that the regional experts would benefit from a follow-up event to build on the work accomplished. Consequently, an advanced workshop on BWC national implementation was organised in March 2022. The workshop took place

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<sup>1</sup> [BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/WP.1](#) - Online Training Course for Biological Weapons Convention National Contact Points in Southeast Asia: A Model Approach for Other Regions – submitted by Japan.



in person, as the pandemic situation allowed the conduct of an international meeting in a safe manner.

4. This paper describes the implementation and outcome of the advanced workshop, which was Phase II of the project with a view to sharing information so that the approach could be implemented in other regions. The paper will also briefly highlight the outcomes and important points raised during the online training course, which was Phase I of the project.

## **II. Project Implementation**

### **Regional workshop on strengthening the capacity of BWC NCPs from the ASEAN States Parties (Geneva, Switzerland)**

5. The workshop aimed at supporting ASEAN Member States in their efforts to enhance the national implementation of the BWC. Thirty-one participants, including from six ASEAN Member States (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand) attended the workshop which took place on 30 March 2022 in Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.

6. The workshop further assisted the participants to enhance their understanding of the role and responsibilities of BWC NCPs including States Parties' obligations under the Convention. It provided an opportunity for national experts to exchange views and share experiences on a broad spectrum of BWC implementation related issues, including nomination and establishment of the NCPs. The workshop also focused on the promotion and preparation of CBMs as well as their complete and timely submission. It also discussed the upcoming Ninth Review Conference and supported States Parties in ASEAN to better prepare for the Conference. Furthermore, the workshop built on the work achieved during the online training course and had the objective to serve as a regional platform for promotion of a network of regional NCPs in the ASEAN region.

7. The workshop comprised three thematic sessions;

(a) Following an introduction of the workshop's objectives and an update of the project, the first session of the event addressed BWC national implementation issues including inter alia, lessons learned and guidance on the development of BWC national implementation legislation;

(b) The second session was on BWC Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs). During this session, participants were informed about the CBMs and collection and submission processes. The session concluded with a presentation from the Philippines describing the national experience in CBMs data collection and validation processes, including challenges and lessons learned. The CBM session also benefited from an interactive and dynamic discussion between regional experts who shared their national experiences and pointed out the CBMs process-related challenges at a national level;

(c) The third and final session of the workshop was dedicated to the Ninth Review Conference. The session discussed the history of BWC Review Conferences in the past and the potential outcomes of the upcoming Ninth Review Conference. The session included a presentation on recent advances in life sciences and technology of relevance to the operation of the BWC which was delivered by a representative from the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. During the presentation, the participants were updated on the latest scientific trends and developments and their implications for the BWC. The final presentation of the third session was delivered by a representative of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research in which the participants were informed about the most crucial issues for the Review Conference, including the latest status of BWC international cooperation mechanisms, science and technology advances and important preparatory steps for a successful Review Conference.

8. During the workshop, the following issues, inter alia, were highlighted:

(a) Participants noted the complexity of the nomination process for NCPs, as well as the policy and technical challenges faced by the NCPs. Participants highlighted the crucial

tasks distribution between the relevant domestic stakeholders and the NCP, to avoid duplication of work and ensure effective coordination and communication;

(b) The workshop attendees acknowledged the importance of BWC national implementation legislation and agreed that having a generic draft legislation model could assist States Parties to develop their legislation;

(c) The discussions on CBMs highlighted, inter alia, the following issues:

- i. The workshop demonstrated that collection and national validation of CBMs is a multi-agency task;
- ii. The participants also stressed that some of the data CBMs relevant to the CBMs falls into the category of sensitive national information. In these cases, national implementation legislation could facilitate the data collection process from different national entities;
- iii. Considering the challenges for a first CBM submission, a progressive “step-by-step” approach could be considered;
- iv. A *timely, complete, and accurate* submission of CBMs should be considered as essential outcome elements of this process.

(d) Workshop participants also recognised the important and successful steps in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic by rapid formulation, manufacturing and distribution of new vaccines in a short period. This highlighted the importance of international mechanisms for the mitigation of biological risks;

(e) The participants also recognised the risks which could be posed by recent advances in life sciences and relevant technology due to potential misuse by individuals or non-State actors. The need for adequate penalties to deter such misuse in the context of national implementation legislation was stressed in the workshop discussions. Participants also underlined that States need to rethink the concept of “governance” in the light of the rapid and recent advances in life sciences and the risks which could be posed by Dual Use Research of Concerns (DURC);

(f) Participants also shared views on the upcoming Ninth Review Conference including:

- i. The importance of the Conference was highlighted as a crucial opportunity for States Parties to make significant progress on strengthening the BWC. It should therefore not be treated as just “another BWC meeting”;
- ii. Participants discussed important preparatory elements to be considered by States Parties to ensure a successful outcome at the Ninth Review Conference, including solid financial preparations, impactful working papers, statements and interactions;
- iii. Benefits of strengthening the international assistance mechanisms under Articles VII and X of the Convention were noted. The importance of enhancing and operationalising such mechanisms was stressed because of potential catastrophic impacts of a deliberate biological incident;
- iv. Participants also discussed the important impact of procedural issues on the substantive and political outcome of BWC meetings and the Review Conference, including the difficulties in finding suitable dates or the need for States Parties to demonstrate agility and flexibility with the format (in-person, hybrid or virtual participation) of the meetings during the pandemic.

### III. Conclusion

9. The project on ‘Strengthening the capacity of Biological Weapons Convention National Contact Points’ was planned and delivered as a capacity-building initiative to support the BWC Southeast Asian States Parties in their efforts to enhance the national

implementation of the BWC. The project comprised an online training course and an in-person workshop in Geneva, Switzerland. These activities were carried out between September 2020 and March 2022. Forty-one representatives from nine States Parties in Southeast Asia participated in the two capacity-building activities. Representatives of international academic institutions, international organizations, and NGOs including the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security (JHCHS), the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC) and States Parties and the BWC ISU staff contributed to the workshops' sessions. The project addressed a wide range of regional experts with diverse relevant policy and operational backgrounds including, security, public health, scientific/technical and the diplomatic community.

10. The workshop developed a better understanding of NCP roles and responsibilities and preparation of BWC CBMs. It also successfully provided a forum for exchange of technical and policy related views and created a positive learning environment to enhance the implementation of BWC despite the challenging circumstances during the pandemic. The final workshop also addressed the most important issues of the upcoming Review Conference.

11. The training objectives of the project were achieved through delivery of an online workshop in 2020 and an in-person workshop in 2022. The workshops offered 10 thematic presentations and three self-paced study modules including an active learning session on CBMs and a dedicated session on the BWC Ninth Review Conference. Furthermore, 14 speakers representing international academic institutions, international organizations, and NGOs presented during the two workshops. Activities included the first ever online training course organised and delivered by the ISU, in close consultation with Japan. This initiative could be used as a model for training and assistance activities in other regions, both during the Covid-19 pandemic, and beyond. Despite the restrictions imposed by COVID-19, the workshops' participants could exchange views and share their experiences with regard to national implementation and CBMs related issues.

12. The Government of Japan expresses its sincere appreciation to States Parties, international academic institutions, international organizations and NGOs that actively contributed to this capacity-building initiative. The Government of Japan hopes that the activities of the project have contributed to enhance the knowledge on role and responsibilities of NCPs, the importance of CBM preparation and submission processes, as well as supported the preparation of the Ninth Review Conference for States Parties in Southeast Asia and can be further used as a model in other regions.

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