

**Meeting 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**

8 November 2017

English only

2017 Meeting**Geneva, 4-8 December 2017**

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

**Issues of substance and process for the period before
the next Review Conference, with a view to reaching
consensus on an intersessional process**

**Peer Review Exercise on the National
Implementation of the Biological Weapons
Convention (Morocco 9-11 May 2017)**

Submitted by Morocco**I. Introduction**

1. From 9th to 11th May 2017, the Government of Morocco organized a peer review exercise on the national implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) with the support of the European Union (EU), Belgium, the Netherlands and France. The National Institute of Hygiene/Ministry of Health had the lead role in organizing the exercise in close collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

2. Held in Rabat and Casablanca, the event was intended to broaden support for the European Union promoted peer review mechanism concept, which has the following objectives:

- To strengthen national implementation of the BWC;
- To improve confidence in compliance by increased transparency; and
- To deepen international cooperation.

3. Notably, and while building upon the three previous peer review exercises conducted in France (2013), Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg (2015) and Germany (2016), it was the first time that such an exercise has taken place outside the EU. The exercise was carried out with financial support provided by the EU under its Council Decision 2016/51 (CFSP) in support of the BWC. As such, the EU provided funding for the participation of most of the 16 international experts from 10 States Parties to the BWC and the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) that were invited by the Moroccan Government (see Appendix 1: list of international experts that attended the peer review exercise).

4. At the national level, around 40 national representatives (see Appendix 2: list of national participants) from the following governmental institutions and non-governmental entities participated in the event:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation;



- Ministry of Health: National Institute of Hygiene, Hospital Directorate, Pharmacy and Drug Control Directorate, Directorate of Epidemiology and Disease Control, Institut Pasteur du Maroc, Radio-Protection Center, Anti-Poison Center, Regulation Directorate;
- Ministry of Interior: Directorate General of National Security, Directorate General of Civil Protection;
- Ministry of Foreign Trade;
- National Defense (Forces Armées Royales): Military Health, Division de veille et Sécurité Sanitaire des FAR and Inspection Génie;
- Gendarmerie Royale;
- Ministry of Higher Education;
- Ministry of Agriculture: National Office for the Safety of Food Products and The veterinary vaccine production company (BIOPHARMA); and
- Moroccan Biosafety Associations: MOBSA and AMBS.

II. Exercise Objectives

5. The main objective as defined by the Moroccan authorities was to address transparency and confidence building measures among States Parties to the BWC. The participation of international experts aimed to establish contacts and to exchange experiences and good practices on how to implement the BWC. Furthermore, the exercise organizers identified three specific objectives:

- To present Moroccan efforts in controlling the proliferation of pathogens;
- To allow the international experts to visit some of the most important Moroccan laboratories in order to picture the way of pathogens management in Morocco; and
- To obtain the necessary recommendations from experts to enhance the BWC implementation.

III. Exercise Proceedings

6. Exercise proceedings comprised a one-day national seminar followed by two days of visits at different institutions in Rabat and Casablanca. The seminar held on 9th May 2017 brought together various national governmental and non-governmental stakeholders as well as international participants, with a view to address a wide range of national implementation-related aspects (see Appendix 3: peer review exercise programme). It provided a broad overview of Morocco's efforts in the area through a series of presentations followed by discussions. The presence of the international experts allowed to seek their feedback and suggestions. The present report complements the views already expressed during the workshop. Additionally, the workshop was used as a platform to develop a set of recommendations for follow-up action.

7. The information presented during the seminar was complemented by visits to five different governmental institutions in Rabat and Casablanca, on 10th and 11th May 2017. The visits consisted of introductory presentations delivered by facility staff, followed by guided tours of the following institutions:

- National Institute for Safety of Food Products, Rabat;
- Animal Vaccine Production facility (BIOPHARMA), Rabat;
- Moulay Youssef Hospital, Casablanca;
- National Institute of Hygiene, Rabat; and
- Institut Pasteur du Maroc, Casablanca.

IV. Some feedback from international experts

8. The international experts extended their appreciation to Morocco for the invitation to participate in the peer review exercise and to learn more about its national implementation of the BWC.

9. The participants commended the Moroccan authorities for their high level of commitment to the BWC, the professionalism displayed by Moroccan representatives, and the well-prepared exercise. The international representatives also expressed their appreciation to all institutions that made their facilities available for the visits, which contributed significantly to the Peer Review.

10. Experts felt that Morocco rose successfully the challenge of providing a broad overview without neglecting depth and details when it provided access to five different sites in the course of the two days following the initial seminar. Due to the smooth organization, there was enough time at each of the visited institutions to examine the relevant facilities thoroughly despite the very ambitious program. Moreover, various experts noted the highly transparent manner in which the exercise was conducted.

A. Seminar, 9 May 2017

11. The international experts noted the wide variety of issues that were addressed during the seminar. The presentations not only informed participants about mechanisms and procedures already in place, but also highlighted elements currently missing in Morocco's implementation.

12. The areas of general biosafety, biosecurity and biorisk management were addressed with a high level of determination. The presentations on the first day highlighted the fruitful results of many of the measures undertaken by the Moroccan Government as well as their willingness to collaborate with the international community to continually adapt and improve their biosafety and biosecurity strategy. Elements of three of the pillars of national BWC implementation, namely a system of biosafety and biosecurity, an export control system and an awareness raising policy, were presented in an informative, detailed and transparent way.

13. The presentations from civil society (the biosafety associations (MOBSA and AMBS)) were considered as very useful. These presentations showed that biosafety and biosecurity issues are not only a matter for national authorities, but in fact the responsibility of a much wider circle of stakeholders, including governmental and non-governmental entities.

14. A few experts felt however that the provided overview was a bit too extensive, as elements that may not be related directly to BWC were also covered by the speakers, probably trying to offer a view as broad as possible of all the elements that were thought to be of interest. Accordingly, some of the presentations were considered as too long, which reduced the time available for discussion.

15. Overall, the seminar enabled the international experts to gain a good understanding of the way pathogens are managed in Morocco. Many experts also noted the fruitful, frank and all-inclusive discussions, which enabled the generation of recommendations for enhanced national implementation and provided suggestions for areas of deepened international cooperation.

B. Visits, 10 and 11 May 2017

16. The visits complemented the seminar by providing first-hand, practical insights on national implementation aspects and contributed to demonstrating transparency and building confidence in compliance. Notably, the international experts were, inter alia, provided with access to two Biosafety Level 3 laboratories, at the Institut Pasteur du Maroc in Casablanca, and at the BIOPHARMA vaccine production facility in Rabat. Various participants noted an exemplary level of transparency during these visits. All staff present

was available for questions and no room seemed to be off limits, except due to justifiable logistical constraints.

17. As noted by some experts, the scientific facilities visited all appeared to be well connected to the international research community, regularly publishing their findings and thereby demonstrating their research interests to be consistent with peaceful intent. During the visits to the different BWC relevant sites, physical as well as administrative safety and security measures appeared to be consistent with international standards and adequate to their purpose.

V. Suggestions and Recommendations

18. The following priority areas were identified as part of the feedback from the international experts.

A. Legislation

19. The BWC contains legal obligations requiring national implementing laws to prohibit the misuse of biological agents, toxins, and equipment and to prevent their development, production, stockpiling, acquisition, transfer, and/or retention.

20. Considering both the presentations and visits, many experts noted in their observations the crucial need to address legislative issues to further strengthen BWC implementation at the national level. Many of the experts recommended that Morocco conducts a legislation gap analysis in order to review and discuss the current legislation and follow up with corresponding measures.

21. The gap analysis would determine what aspects of effective legal implementation might be missing from existing or expected law, or might need to be updated knowing that Morocco is working on legislation to meet the BWC's obligations.

22. Recommended areas for priority attention with regard to legal implementation include:

- Legislation related to pathogenic agents;
- Establishment of the list of dangerous materials subject to special controls for safety and security which includes relevant animal, human, zoonotic, and plant pathogens and toxins; and
- Acceleration of the passage of the dual use export controls bill.

23. Establishment of an inter-ministerial body in charge of the implementation of the BWC.

24. Some experts suggested the creation of an inter-ministerial body that would identify the necessary legislation to be drafted as well as to supervise the necessary coordination among different existing or newly created governmental agencies and ministries. This would enable a national "one health approach" of biological risk management to be efficiently set to work, in an atmosphere of interagency cooperation. This ministerial body could be officially used for all matters related to the BWC and to other international treaties or agreements if it is so decided by the Moroccan Government.

25. The inter-ministerial body could also revise all the existing relevant legislation so that it could be implemented or newly drafted/updated according to the identified needs.

B. Development of a national program for BWC implementation.

26. In line with the recommendation above, the inter-ministerial body could elaborate the National Program for BWC implementation.

27. This program would encompass all issues that require action to be taken and, at the same time, provide a way to exert that action. This program should, inter alia, address the following issues:

(a) Elaborate at the national level an inventory of pathogens and toxins (human, animal and plant), including the facilities where they are kept and the biosafety and biosecurity measures in place in those facilities;

(b) Some of these facilities may require a specific physical protection program both indoors and outdoors;

(c) Biosecurity in these facilities or their parts should be categorized according to the pathogens they harbour, and appropriate permission should be granted for their functioning according to that degree;

(d) Security accreditation and clearance will be necessary for workers handling the pathogens;

(e) A specific norm should regulate the transport of pathogens and toxins inside and outside the country and their custody during that transport;

(f) A specific system to monitor the potential intangible transfer of technology should be set to work to complement the control of dual use pathogens, toxins, materials and equipment; and

(g) Promote scientific research related to BWC.

C. BWC Awareness Raising Campaign

28. BWC awareness – like in many other countries – needs to be improved. Consequently, investing in an awareness campaign – especially amongst trainers, researchers and students - would be useful.

VI. Conclusions

29. This detailed report, complemented by the joint feedback of the international experts, is published to share the results obtained from the peer review exercise.

30. Conducting a peer review exercise in May 2017, demonstrated Morocco's commitment to transparency and confidence building within the framework of the BWC. This effort was complemented by this detailed report shared by the Moroccan authorities.

31. In line with the previous peer review exercises and similar initiatives conducted by other States, Morocco has contributed towards establishing this approach as an accepted standard under the BWC that is highly valuable to BWC States Parties.

32. Morocco has been commended by the international experts for the way it has implemented the BWC at the domestic level. At the same time, they also identified a number of areas for further improvement. These relate most notably to the need for:

- further implementing legislation;
- establishment of an inter-ministerial body in charge of BWC implementation;
- development of a national program for BWC implementation; and
- BWC awareness raising.

33. These key priorities could be complemented by further efforts in Morocco to raise awareness of the BWC and its requirements.

34. As evidenced through the peer review exercise, national implementation of the BWC in Morocco involves various stakeholders both at the governmental and non-governmental level. Effective cooperation among the ministries, laboratories, and other governmental entities with responsibilities for BWC implementation is therefore essential.

35. The participants commended the Moroccan authorities for the well prepared exercise. Additionally, they expressed their appreciation for the great level of hospitality shown, which made all international experts feel comfortable and very welcomed.

36. Moroccan organizers and participants thank the BWC Implementation Support Unit, the European Union and all the experts.

Appendix I

List of international experts

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Country</i>
Hermann Alex Lampalzer	Deputy Chief	Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit, United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs	
Mirjam Martha Schaap	Research Scientist	National Institute for Public Health and the Environment	Netherlands
Alslami Abdullah	Lieutenant Colonel	Royal Saudi Air Defence Forces	Saudi Arabia
Rafael Perez Mellado	Advisor	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation	Spain
Siddha Hover	National Security Analyst	US Department of State	United States
Scott Davis	Deputy Director	Biological Policy Staff, Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, US Department of State	United States
Zhaohui Yang	Counsellor	Department Arms Control, Minister of Foreign Affairs	China
Saif Abdulla Saif Mohamed Al Yahyae	Biological Lab Technician	United Arab Emirates Armed Forces (Chemical Defense)	United Arab Emirates
Philipe Herman	Operational Director	Scientific Institute of Public Health (WIV-ISP)	Belgium
Eric Valade	Professor	Ministry of Defence	France
Christophe Genisset	Biology Project Leader	Prime Minister Office	France
Yves Rols	Advisor Counter-Proliferation	Ministry of Defence	France
Landry Mboumba	Director of International Organisations	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Regional Integration	Gabon
Steffen Uebe	Arms Control Officer	German Armed Forces Verification Center	Germany
Julia Nordmann	Desk Officer Biological Weapons Issues	German Federal Foreign Office	Germany
Ahmed Al Falahi	Head of Biological Department	Abu Dhabi Laboratory	United Arab Emirates

Appendix II

List of Moroccan experts participants

“Exercice Pilote de la revue par les pairs (CIABT)” Rabat, 09 May 2017 (Hôtel DIWANE)

<i>Nom & Prénom</i>	<i>Institution</i>
Naima Rhalem	Centre Anti Poison et de Pharmaco Vigilance
Mohamed Moussif	Contrôle Sanitaire aux Frontières -Aéroport Med V-
Brahim AIT ADDI	Secrétariat d’Etat chargé du Commerce Extérieur
Ibtissam HAMDI	Secrétariat d’Etat chargé du Commerce Extérieur
Monsef Ziani	DELM -Ministère de la santé
Khalid Tamsamani	MOBSA
Samira Senouci	MOBSA
Karim Filali Maltof	Association Marocaine de Biosécurité
Leila MEDRAOUI	Association Marocaine de Biosécurité
Laila SBABOU	Association Marocaine de Biosécurité
Yassir Lezaar	Office National de Sécurité Sanitaire des produits Alimentaires
Said Mouhri	BIOPHARMA
Karim El Yakoubi	Ministère de l’Enseignement Supérieur
Jalal Nourlil	Institut Pasteur du Maroc
Mohammed Abid	Institut Pasteur du Maroc
Srhir Bousalham	Direction des Hôpitaux et des Soins Ambulatoires - Ministère de la santé
Abdessadik Lebrini	Gendarmerie Royale
Abdelhafid Hammouti	SAMU
Abouabdellah Karim	CHIS
Nom & Prénom	Institution
Adil Fellah	Ministère de l’Intérieur
Houriya El Badaoui	Centre National de Radio Protection – Ministère de la Santé
Mohamed Arji	Direction Générale de Sécurité Nationale
Younes Karam	Centre National de Transfusion Sanguine– Ministère de la Santé
Hassan Mountassir	Direction de la Réglementation et du Contentieux - Ministère de la Santé

<i>Nom & Prénom</i>	<i>Institution</i>
Ali Kettani	SAMU/CHU IBN SINA– Ministère de la Santé
Hafid Messaoudi	Direction Générale de la Protection Civile
Adil El Merdi	Inspection Génie/EMG/FAR
Younes El Wahli	Office National de Sécurité Sanitaire des produits Alimentaires
Lalla.Saloua Moumni	Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et de la Coopération Internationale
Ismail Chekkouri	Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et de la Coopération Internationale
Abelkarim.Filali Maltouf	Association Marocaine de Biosécurité
Mohamed Rbai	Division de veille et sécurité sanitaire /FAR
Mohamed Rhajaoui	Institut National d'Hygiène – Ministère de la Santé
Hicham Oumzil	Institut National d'Hygiène – Ministère de la Santé
Nezha Barakat	Institut National d'Hygiène – Ministère de la Santé
Rhizlaine Selka	Institut National d'Hygiène – Ministère de la Santé
Asmae Tantan	Institut National d'Hygiène – Ministère de la Santé
Ilham Nasri	Institut National d'Hygiène – Ministère de la Santé
Salima M'Seffer	Institut National d'Hygiène – Ministère de la Santé
Saida Aoune	Institut National d'Hygiène – Ministère de la Santé
Amina Hançali	Institut National d'Hygiène – Ministère de la Santé

Appendix 3

Peer Review Exercise on the national implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention

Hotel Diwan Rabat – Morocco (9 May 2017)

Agenda

	<i>Titles</i>	<i>Department</i>
08:30 – 09:00	Registration	
09:00 – 09:30	Opening ceremony	Mohamed Rhajaoui Institut National d'Hygiène Ismail Chekouri Ministry of Foreign Affairs
09:30 – 09:45	Coffee break	
Session1: 9:30 - 12:00		
Modérateurs : Dr Mohamed Rbai / Pr Abdelkrim Filali-Maltouf		
Rapporteurs: Mme Asmae Tantane/ Mme Amina Hançali		
09:30 – 09:45	Morocco's commitment for the promotion of multilateral cooperation and CABT implementation	Lalla Saloua Moumni Ministry of Foreign Affairs
09:45 – 10:05	System to control the detection and handling of pathogens	Rhizlane Selka INH - Ministry of Health
10:05 – 10:25	Control at the port entries	Mohamed Moussif Sécurité Sanitaire aux Frontieres- Aéroport Med V
10:25 – 10:45	Experience of the Ministry of Health in managing public health emergencies, history of response plans, organizational arrangements, and illustration by the case of EBOLA.	Monsef Ziani Direction de l'Epidémiologie et de lutte contre les Maladies – Ministry of Health
10:45 – 11:00	Discussion	
11:00 -11:20	Surveillance and response against animal pathogens in Morocco (Example of H9N2)	Yasser Lezaar BIOPHARMA
11:20 -11:35	Approval and import of pathogenic strains /vaccines.	Younes El Wahli Office National de Sécurité Sanitaire des produits Alimentaires
11:35 – 12:00	Discussion	

	<i>Titles</i>	<i>Department</i>
12:00 – 14:00	Lunch	
Session 2: 14:00 – 17:20		
Modérateurs : Dr Hicham Oumzil/ Dr Jalal Nourellil		
Rapporteur: Mme Rhizlaine Selka/ Mme Nezha Barakat		
14:00 – 14:20	Import / Export of dual-use goods	Brahim Ait Addi Ministry of Foreign Trade
14:20 – 14:40	Monitoring and crisis management.	Mohamed Arji Directorate General of National Security
14:40 – 15:00	NRBC National Action Plan (Biological and Chemical Component).	Hafid Messaoudi Directorate General of Civil Protection
15:00 – 15:20	Discussion	
15:20 – 15:40	Contribution of the Ministry of higher education	Karim ELYAKOUBI Ministry of Higher Education
15:40 – 16:55	Towards Enhanced Biological Risk Management Capacity at the National and International Level	Khalid Temsamani Moroccan biosafety association (AMABIOS)
16:55 – 17:05	AMBS training / awareness-raising experience.	Abdelkarim Filali Maltouf Moroccan biosafety association (AMBS)
17:05 – 17:20	Discussion	
17:20 – 17:30	Coffee break	
17:30 – 17:45	Recommandations	
17:45 – 18:00	Clôture	