

**Совещание государств – участников
Конвенции о запрещении разработки,
производства и накопления запасов
бактериологического (биологического)
и токсинного оружия и об их уничтожении**

25 July 2019

Russian only

Совещание 2019 года

Женева, 3–6 декабря 2019 года

**Совещание экспертов по институциональному
укреплению Конвенции**

Женева, 8 августа 2019 года

Пункт 4 предварительной повестки дня

**Рассмотрение всего спектра подходов и вариантов для дальнейшего
укрепления Конвенции и ее функционирования на основе возможных
дополнительных правовых мер или других мер в рамках Конвенции**

**Международная конференция «Глобальные
угрозы биологической безопасности. Проблемы
и решения» (Сочи, 20-21 июня 2019 г.)**

Рабочий документ Российской Федерации

1. 20-21 июня 2019 г. в Сочи состоялась вторая международная научно-практическая конференция «Глобальные угрозы биологической безопасности. Проблемы и решения», организованная Правительством Российской Федерации. Более 120 участников из 27 стран, международных организаций (ООН, ВОЗ, ОДКБ) и неправительственного экспертного сообщества предметно рассмотрели проблематику противодействия биологическим угрозам, связанным с распространением инфекционных болезней и рискам применения микроорганизмов и токсинов в качестве биологического оружия.

2. Участники подробно обсудили текущее состояние биологической безопасности в мире, отметив возрастающие риски для здоровья людей, вызванные эпидемиями, а также угрозы противоправного применения достижений в сфере биотехнологий и синтетической биологии. Подчеркнута необходимость совершенствования международных механизмов реагирования на текущую вспышку лихорадки Эбола в Африке и другие чрезвычайные ситуации санитарно-эпидемиологического характера, усиления борьбы с вакциноуправляемыми инфекциями, снижения рисков от природно-очаговых инфекций и вновь возникающих патогенов (пандемический грипп, ближневосточный респираторный синдром), противодействия распространению устойчивости к противомикробным препаратам. Безотлагательного решения требует задача повышения уровня подготовки в области биологической защиты и биологической безопасности.

3. Особое внимание уделялось обсуждению вопросов улучшения осуществления КБТО и содействия идущему в ее формате переговорному процессу.

4. Подтверждено основополагающее значение Конвенции как главного инструмента международного права, призванного предотвратить использование биологических агентов в качестве оружия. Обозначена насущная необходимость совершенствования механизмов реализации КБТО, включая мониторинг научно-



технических достижений, развитие международного сотрудничества для предотвращения инфекционных болезней, национальное осуществление положений Конвенции, помощь и защиту от биологического оружия и другие вопросы.

5. Участники были ознакомлены с передовым российским опытом и наработками в сфере обеспечения биологической безопасности, включая мобильные медико-биологические формирования быстрого реагирования Роспотребнадзора, Минобороны России и ФСБ России. Представлены последние достижения в сфере исследований и наработок средств профилактики и диагностики инфекций, включая новые технологии разработки вакцин против особо опасных инфекций.

6. Рассмотрены вопросы подготовки к предстоящей в 2021 г. Девятой обзорной конференции КБТО. Обозначена важность формирования инструментов для системного институционального укрепления режима Конвенции. Для этого следует продолжить экспертную работу по межгосударственному согласованию и подготовке к принятию на Девятой обзорной конференции соответствующих перспективных инициатив. В данном контексте подчеркнута недопустимость подмены функций КБТО другими механизмами, не имеющими многосторонней инклюзивной природы.

7. В ходе конференции были организованы шесть тематических дискуссионных сессий:

- международное сотрудничество в мирных целях, модератор Анита Цицero, заместитель директора, Центр безопасности здоровья, Университет им. Джона Гопкинса (США);
- научно-технические достижения, имеющие отношение к Конвенции, модератор Педро Далсерo, советник-посланник Постоянного представительства Бразилии на Конференции по разоружению;
- национальное осуществление КБТО, модератор Посол Панкадж Шарма, Постоянный представитель Индии на Конференции по разоружению;
- готовность, реагирование и помощь, модератор Усман Джадун, советник Постоянного представительства Пакистана при отделении ООН в Женеве;
- институциональное укрепление Конвенции, модератор В.А.Ладанов, МИД России;
- ожидания от Девятой обзорной конференции КБТО, модератор Посол Дьёрдь Молнар, Специальный представитель МИД Венгрии по вопросам контроля над вооружениями, разоружения и нераспространения.

8. Неформальные резюме дискуссий, подготовленные модераторами в личном качестве, находятся в приложении к этому рабочему документу.

9. Площадка конференции в Сочи, предоставляемая Российской Федерацией, призвана способствовать углубленным и открытым дискуссиям государственных ведомств разных стран, научного сообщества и некоммерческого сектора по многим важным вопросам обеспечения глобальной биологической безопасности и осуществления КБТО. «Дух Сочи» имеет целью содействие конструктивному и результативному дипломатическому процессу в формате Конвенции. Для продолжения этой традиции третья международная конференция «Глобальные угрозы биологической безопасности: проблемы и решения» будет организована в Российской Федерации в 2021 году.

Приложение: упомянутое, на 14 лл.

[English unofficial translation]

International conference “Global biosecurity challenges. Problems and solutions”, Sochi, 20-21 June 2019

Submitted by the Russian Federation

1. The second international conference “Global biosecurity challenges. Problems and solutions” took place in Sochi from 20-21 June 2019. It was organised by the Government of the Russian Federation. Over 120 participants from 27 countries and international organisations (the United Nations, World Health Organisation, Collective Security Treaty Organisation) and NGOs engaged in a substantive exchange on how to counter biological threats relating to the spread of infectious diseases and reduce the risks of using microbiological agents and toxins as weapons.
2. Participants had a meaningful discussion on the current situation in global biosecurity and noted the growing risks to the health of humans caused by epidemics as well as the threat potential of malicious application of achievements in biotechnology and synthetic biology. They stressed the need for improving international response mechanisms to the ongoing Ebola outbreak in Africa and other public health emergencies; strengthening capacities to tackle vaccine preventable infections; reducing risks of endemic infectious diseases and emerging pathogens (pandemic flu, MERS); addressing antimicrobial resistance. An urgent imperative of enhancing preparedness in biosafety and biosecurity was underlined.
3. A special salience was given to the examination of issues pertaining to enhancing implementation of the BWC and promoting diplomatic process in its framework.
4. A crucial significance of the Convention as a cornerstone of international law laid down to prevent the use of biological agents as weapons was reaffirmed. Participants spoke about a clear demand for improving the BWC’s implementation including as regards monitoring relevant science and technology developments, furthering international co-operation for the prevention of infectious diseases, strengthening national implementation and building up capacities for delivering assistance and protection from biological weapons.
5. Participants were introduced to the state-of-the-art Russian expertise and innovations in biosecurity such as mobile biomedical units of Rospotrebnadzor/Health Protection Agency, Ministry of Defence and the Federal Security Service. They were familiarised with the recent achievements in R&D on prophylaxis and diagnostics *inter alia* new technologies of developing vaccines against especially dangerous infections.
6. Matters relating to the preparations for the upcoming BWC Ninth Review Conference were considered. Participants referred to the importance of creating a toolset for a comprehensive institutional strengthening of the Convention. To make it happen, States Parties’ experts should continue their efforts on harmonising and getting ready for adoption relevant promising initiatives at the Review Conference. In this context the inadmissibility of attempts to supplant the functions of the BWC with non-inclusive and divisive mechanisms was stressed.
7. Six thematic discussion sessions were convened at the conference:
 - international co-operation for peaceful purposes, facilitator Dr Anita Cicero, John Hopkins Centre for Health Security, USA;
 - science and technology developments relevant to the BWC, facilitator Pedro Dalcero, Minister Counsellor, Special Representation of Brazil to the Conference on Disarmament;
 - national implementation, facilitator Ambassador Pankaj Sharma, Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament;
 - preparedness, response and assistance, facilitator Usman Jadoon, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN in Geneva;

- institutional strengthening of the BWC, facilitator Vladimir Ladanov, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Russia;
- expectations from the Ninth Review Conference, facilitator Ambassador György Molnár, Special Representative for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary.

8. Informal summaries of discussion prepared by facilitators in their personal capacity are enclosed.

9. The Sochi conference platform made available by the Russian Federation has a purpose of facilitating in-depth and open discussions involving officials, academia and NGOs on many important aspects of safeguarding global biosecurity and implementing the BWC. The “Sochi spirit” is aiming to contribute to a productive diplomatic process in the format of the Convention. To continue that tradition, a third international conference “Global biosecurity challenges. Problems and solutions” will be convened in 2021 in the Russian Federation.

Enclosure: As Above, 14 pages.

Annex

Discussion session on international co-operation for peaceful purposes

Prepared by Working Session Facilitator, Anita Cicero, Deputy Director, John Hopkins Center for Health Security (20 June 2019)

1. The Russian Federation organized a conference on “Global Biosecurity Challenges: problems and solutions,” hosted in Sochi from June 20-21, 2019. In a 70 minute working session on “International Co-operation for Peaceful Purposes,” which took place during the conference on 20 June, participants discussed the status of Article X under the BWC and offered ideas for advancing the further implementation of Article X.

2. During this working Session, participants heard brief opening remarks from Dr. Anita Cicero (Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security), Dr. Vyacheslav Smolenskiy (Rospotrebnadzor, Russia), Dr. Zhandarbek Bekshin (Ministry of Health, Kazakhstan), and Dr. Peter Hammond (Public Health England).

Dr. Anita Cicero

3. In her remarks, Dr. Cicero provided an overview of Article X and noted the importance of the States Parties’ international commitment to advance and use the life sciences for peaceful purposes. She emphasized that countries need technical capabilities to protect themselves from deliberate, accidental, and naturally occurring biological threats and also stated that countries can benefit from an economic and public health perspective from advances in science and technology. She reviewed the many fruitful areas for cooperation and assistance under Article X, including capacity building for detection of and response to biological events, as well as laboratory biosafety/biosecurity, scientific collaboration and research, and tools for developing CBMs and successful implementation of the BWC. Ms. Cicero noted that the Global Health Security Agenda and the Joint External Evaluation process both contribute to gaps assessment and capacity building within countries engaged in these efforts. She also noted the many complementary linkages between Article X and other Articles of the Convention, including Articles VI, VII, and IV.

4. Dr. Cicero then focused her remarks on the progress made and challenges faced by both the Article X database as well as the Article X reports. She revisited some ideas offered previously for advancing Article X, including:

- Adding a full time ISU staff member with a background in international development who could be devoted to matching requests for assistance with offers of assistance;
- Optimizing the operationalization of the Article X database;
- Developing guidelines for Article X reports;
- Organizing additional technical meetings at the regional level to address Article X needs.

5. In addition, Dr. Cicero proposed that NGO offers of assistance could be added to the Article X database or otherwise aggregated and shared on a less formal basis with the States Parties. She noted that this has been done with some success under the Global Health Security Agenda. In the BWC context, NGO offers of assistance could include:

- Hosting biosecurity workshops, tabletop exercises, training & education modules, and bi-lateral or multi-lateral biosecurity dialogues;
- Awareness raising around advances in S&T and facilitating connections between the private sector and the BWC;

- Providing assistance to States Parties on national implementation of the BWC and preparation of confidence building measures; and
- Offering policy suggestions on the governance of the advanced life sciences that are developed jointly through collaboration of NGOs from different countries.

Dr. Vyacheslav Smolenskiy

6. Dr. Smolenskiy elaborated on the need for collective security rather than relying only on national systems that are isolated from regional or global systems. He reviewed progress made by the Russian Federation in assisting countries in their region, including through capacity building and financial contributions. He described a new paradigm in which the Russian Federation seeks to jointly collaborate with other countries in research endeavors, rather than simply providing short term assistance. He provided examples of work they have done to assist Armenia, Mongolia, and other countries in the region.

7. In reference to Article X reports, Dr. Smolenskiy questioned their utility to States Parties in need of assistance, and he suggested that certain criteria be developed to determine which types of assistance offered advance the goals of Article X and the Convention as a whole. He proposed that the Article X database be either reformed or terminated, because it is not currently widely used as a helpful resource to countries in need of assistance.

Dr. Zhandarbek Bekshin

8. Dr. Bekshin noted with gratitude that the Russian Federation supplied Kazakhstan with mobile labs, but he did not elaborate, as this topic was previously covered in the plenary. Instead, he focused his remarks on describing the capabilities and attributes of Kazakhstan's Central Reference Laboratory, built in collaboration with the United States under the Cooperative Threat Reduction program. He described its utility in establishing a central storage facility for dangerous pathogens used in medical and veterinary research. Dr. Bekshin also communicated additional benefits of the laboratory, which is managed by the Ministry of Health in Kazakhstan. These benefits include improving the country's diagnostic methods, increasing scientific knowledge, tracking of epidemiological events, and providing BSL-2 and BSL-3 capabilities. He noted that the laboratory is transparent in its operations and that it hosts a number of scientists from many countries who wish to learn more about the work of the reference lab. It is now an official Reference Center of WHO in Central Asia.

Dr. Peter Hammond

9. Public Health England's mission is to protect the nation's health and to reduce health inequalities. Their activities include preparing for and responding to public health emergencies, including infectious disease outbreaks, as well as protection and improving global health. They are supportive of the Global Health Security Agenda and the International Health Regulations. Public Health England also runs a UK Public Health Rapid Support Team in partnership with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. This Team has, among other things, responded to Ebola and Plague outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Madagascar and to a Lassa Fever outbreak in Nigeria. Many of their activities are closely linked to Article X of the BWC, as they involve not only cooperation, but also training, technology transfer, and the sharing of knowledge and expertise in the fight against disease. Public Health England hosts ten collaborating centres. Dr. Hammond also noted the threats to human health as a result of climate change, and stated that some vectors of disease, including mosquitos, are becoming more common in temperate climates.

Comments from Article X Session Participants

10. There were a number of individual comments from the audience, which included the following:

(a) It is unfortunate that more progress has not been made on Article X implementation. The commenter agreed that the Article X database is not widely used and therefore questioned whether it is helpful to maintain or improve it. Instead, perhaps NGOs in the BWC community should take over the task of monitoring and reporting what is being done under Article X and identify the gaps. The States Parties would not authorize NGOs to judge, but rather use their expertise and knowledge to put together a broad picture of Article X. An example of this is the work by a collection of NGOs under the Land Mine Monitor program.

(b) It may be useful to give States Parties examples of bilateral agreements and cooperation. Often there is a lack of concrete requests or ideas from many States Parties, and it was suggested that perhaps NGOs can help with this issue.

(c) One commenter agreed with the proposal to look for more ways of involving the private sector in BWC issues. Pharmaceutical companies should play a positive role in contributing to Article X and the Convention in the run up to the 9th Review Conference.

(d) Another commenter appreciated that the private sector and NGOs have a role to play but cautioned that it is important to be mindful of potential conflicts and to retain the intergovernmental character of the BWC.

(e) A concern was raised about the increasing number of BSL-3 laboratories, which can present a dual use risk. The suggestion was made that there should be some kind of system to verify proper use of such labs.

(f) A commenter responded that it would be preferable to hear more information about dual use S&T research in a parallel session during the next Review Conference. The commenter also noted that the BSL-3 lab in their country plays an important role in pathogen analysis and increases their economic and analytic possibilities, as well as facilitates their offers of assistance to emerging countries.

(g) Another commenter underscored the importance of using biotechnology for peaceful purposes and spoke against existing restrictions that impede cooperation. Developing countries need access to the benefits of S&T, including vaccines and a strong functioning health system.

(h) A commenter emphasized that there is a need for concrete measures under Article X. NAM has provided proposals and an action plan as a framework for Article X. The view of this commenter is that the action plan should be adopted during the 9th Review Conference in 2021.

11. After this series of robust comments and suggestions, the Working Session was adjourned.

Discussion session on scientific and technological developments relevant to the BWC

12. On section 2, there was a discussion on the “scientific and technological developments relevant to the BWC.” There were seven panelists: Dr. Rinat A. Maksyutov, Director General, State Scientific Research Centre of Virology and Biotechnology, Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Wellbeing of the Russian Federation; Ms. Dana Komárek, policy adviser for Arms Control and Disarmament Policy, of the Swiss Armed Forces; Dr. Jaime Yassif, senior fellow for Global Biological Policy and Programs of the Nuclear Threat Initiative; Prof. Malcolm Dando, of the University of Bradford; Dr. Nancy Connell, Senior Scholar of the John Hopkins Center for Health Security and the US National Academies of Science; Ms. Kathryn Millet, of Biosecure (representing the private sector); and, Lyu Xiaodong, Deputy Division Director of the Department of Arms Control, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China. The panel was moderated by Mr. Pedro Dalcero, Minister Counsellor of the Special Representation of Brazil to the Conference on Disarmament.

13. Each panelist touched upon specific items related to the subject matter of Section 2. However, some core issues pervaded all presentations, such as the rapid pace of scientific

and technological developments in the area of Life Sciences, on the one hand, and the lack of institutions and regulations, on the other.

14. One presentation highlighted the threat posed by Antimicrobial Resistance, which lowers the inherent ability of humans, animals, and plants to resist natural or deliberate outbreaks. It also focused on recent advances on microbiology, such as genome editing, gene drives, and synthetic biology. All these recent S&T developments are unfolding at the same time as a new societal phenomenon, the emergence of the “do-it-yourself” communities where amateur biologists are undertaking experiments without institutional supervision. These activities, the panelist stressed, runs against the principles of the BWC that closely associates transparency and control. The challenge ahead for policymakers lies on how to establish appropriate regulations for coping with these simultaneous phenomena; breakneck scientific and technological developments happening while there is a trend toward the popularization and democratization of accessing these technologies.

15. The group has also discussed the convergence on chemistry and biology, and issues related to CRISPR Cas technology, DNA origami uses and Chemical Synthesis. There is a concern that these advances in Science and Technology can allow for potential malicious uses or biological warfare purposes. In this regard, an important issue to be addressed will be the limited or virtual lack of traceability of genome editing carried out with CRISPR technology, what puts into question forensics approaches based on genome analysis.

16. In more than one occasion, it was also stated that biotechnology advances are lowering the technical barriers to manipulating biological organisms. It makes it possible for a broader group of actors with fewer resources and less tacit knowledge to produce and engineer pathogens and other biological agents. It is easier to read, write, and edit DNA and RNA. It's also easier to generate pathogens from scratch or modify pathogen virulence, transmissibility, and susceptibility to medical countermeasures. A very well known example was mentioned twice; the case of Canadian researchers who, in 2017, synthesized horsepox, a close cousin of smallpox, for just 100 thousands US dollars using DNA fragments ordered over the internet. This example, among others, clearly shows that democratized access to advanced biotechnology increases the risks of high-consequence biological events, being deliberate biological attacks or accidental release of pathogens.

17. It was also said that the types of biological agents in the future might be different than the traditional pathogens and bioweapons agents that have been used in the past. Future pathogens may be able to focus on different targets, such as human microbiome or the nervous system, the environment, or agriculture. Others biological agents may be engineered to enhance virulence and transmissibility or have the ability to evade detection.

18. Another panelist reminded that biological threats are not limited to pathogens, mentioning that the “European Brain Project” reveals several other risks involved. These other risks are not new, but there is a growing awareness about them. Maybe a valuable topic for future discussions would be “no pathogenic biological risks.”

19. There were presentations on education and awareness-raising, one of them specifically on the Model Code of Conduct proposed by China and Pakistan. It was emphasized that previous experience demonstrated that codes of conduct would be effective only if the life science community were engaged, and active learning practices were required to obtain that engagement. The presentation stressed that the draft Model Code of Conduct addresses this point with the inclusion of education and awareness-raising as two of its ten core elements. The presentation then described three recent initiatives of biosecurity education designed to achieve that engagement using active learning. It was said that hundreds of scientists from several countries have participated in these educational enterprises.

20. A panelist reminded the group that the current Intersessional Programme has as one of its agenda items the “development of a voluntary model code of conduct which meets national requirements of different countries for biological scientists on the basis of previous efforts.” The draft Model Code of Conduct has some important characteristics, mainly its voluntary nature. Many countries have already enacted Codes of Conduct and ethical guidelines in the field of Life Sciences. The proposed Model Code of Conduct makes an effort to clarify to all scientists the moral line which they should keep in mind and respect

while engaging in research activities. If adopted, and as it will be voluntary, the Model Code of Conduct will serve as a reference to state parties and the scientific community, which could choose their ways of implementation and not conflicting with their previous standards.

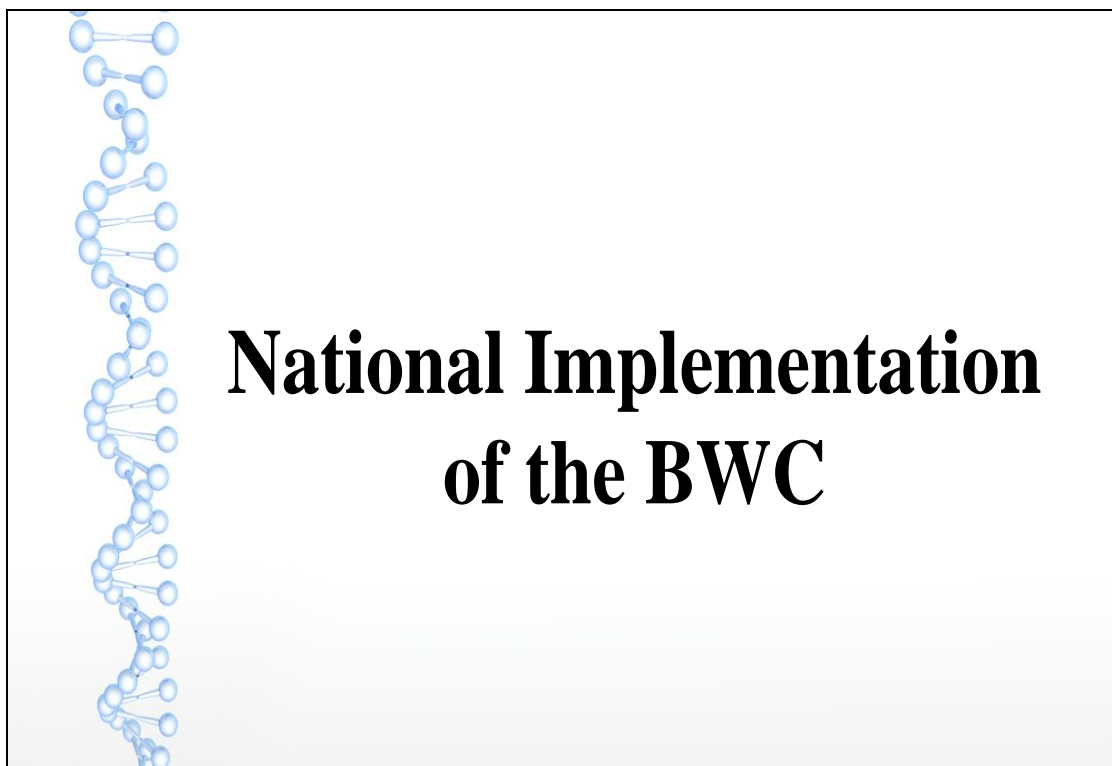
21. With seven panelists, there was not much time for interactive discussions. However, it is important to report that the short discussion focused on the issue of a Model Code of Conduct for biological scientists and relevant personnel. One participant stressed that there are already several national and professional Codes of Conduct adopted and implemented around the world and that Codes of Conduct are a national responsibility. Thus, there is no need for a Code of Conduct in the context of the Biological Weapons Convention.

22. During the discussions, some other practical measures were also recommended. A very brief overview of them will include:

- improved governance for science and technology with the aim of strengthening biosecurity and biosafety;
- to marshal technology to build in biosecurity by design (this recommendation places a crucial role for funding agencies),
- to develop a robust capacity to investigate the source of a biological event,
- to develop sophisticated and sound capacity to detect and respond to biological events that involve novel or engineered pathogens.

23. This is a summarized account of the discussions prepared by the moderator in his personal capacity and under his own responsibility, and might not necessarily reflect the views of all the participants.

Discussion session on national implementation of the BWC



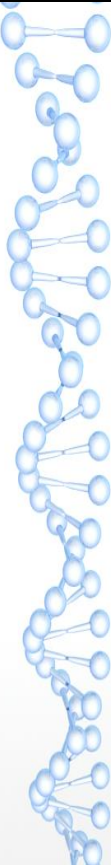
PANEL and PARTICIPANTS

- Dr. Viktor Kholstov, National Authority for CWC and BWC, Russian Federation
- Dr. James Revill, UNIDIR
- Dr. Pankaj Sharma, Ambassador/Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament (Facilitator)


Benefited from the participation and support of:

- All delegates (both from the Russian Federation and other countries)
- Mr. Daniel Feakes, Chief of BWC ISU
- Mr. Richard Lennane, Former Chief BWC ISU
- Ambassador Mohsin Naziri, Islamic Republic of Iran
- Ms. Kathryn Millet, Bio secure
- Ms. Rasyidah Binti Zainal, Malaysia
- Prof. Malcolm Dando, Bradford University

National Implementation

- 
- All encompassing concept,
 - Full and effective implementation of the Convention requires implementation of all the articles of BWC.
 - Articles III, IV, V and X focus
 - Additional understandings and agreements by Successive Review Conferences and MSPs (Well documented by BWC ISU (BWC/MSP/2018/MX.3/2)
 - Selective focus should be avoided and may be counterproductive.
 - Multi stake holder construct
 - No one size fits all

Focus Areas

- 
- Status of Implementation (legislative measures and regulations) –
 - Acknowledge progress (more than 30% increase from 2011) – both qualitative and quantitative
 - National Implementation has expanded beyond laws (e.g. bio security measures, codes of conduct – DIY EU Code of Conduct, Australian outreach measures, Morocco biosecurity caravan)
 - Russian Federation provides a role model through the legislation (Presidential decrees) enacted over the years, including on export controls, penal measures
 - Deepening and Broadening of implementation
 - Transfer provisions (export and import controls) while ensuring that they do not hamper economic and technological development and international cooperation including exchange of materials, technology and equipment
 - National Focal Points (Designation and strengthen their role and functioning)



Focus Areas

- Education and Outreach (OPCW ABEO) and inclusion of BWC in high school and university curricula, including active learning
- Industry outreach (strengthen linkages between BWC National Focal Points and Industry)
- Capacity building
- Checklist of obligations under the BWC – a list of measures that countries should adopt in order to implement the BWC



OPCW as an example

- National and regional awareness workshops
- Regional and international meetings of BWC national focal points
- Training of BWC national focal points and scientists (ToT)
- Advisory Body on Education and Outreach (ABEO)
- Training of Customs Officers



OPCW as an Example

- eLearning modules
- Mentorship programme
- Legal internship programme
- Distinguished visitors programme (Parliamentarians, Ministers and Legislators)
- Regional and international meetings of representatives of industry and BWC national focal points
- Regional and international meetings of academics and BWC national focal points.



Other Suggestions/Proposals

- Systematically map National Activities
- Build a centralised repository of activities and tools
- Gather indicators of success as well as where possible challenges (e.g. for law enforcement bodies or prosecutors)
- Sharing of experiences and best practices (e.g. legal cases)
- Collate metrics and measures, which could indicate where programs have worked or not.
- Make programmes sustainable
- One should try out new proposals and not be afraid of failures.
- Develop action plans for article IV and other articles (e.g. Article X)
- Comprehensive and coordinated needs assessment
- Cooperative projects with the help of international and regional organisations
- Need to mobilise more resources

Discussion session on preparedness, response and assistance

1. The session, moderated by Mr. Usman Jadoon (Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN in Geneva), featured three panellists: (i) Mr. Vladimir Ladanov (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation); Ms. Yuliya Dyomina (Rospotrebnadzor, Russian Federation); and (iii) Mr. Peter Hammond (Public Health England, United Kingdom).

2. The session started with some introductory remarks by the moderator, who highlighted the increasing attention being paid by States Parties to Article VII of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). He drew attention to the cross-regional support for putting in place practical mechanisms for the implementation of this Article. Recalling the discussions that have taken place over the years in the BWC context including at the Meeting of Experts (MX-4) last year, he identified five key themes that were emerging as areas of commonalities:

(a) Establishment of a set of guidelines and formats to assist a State Party submitting an application for assistance under Article VII;

(b) Procedures, including the establishment and use of the assistance database for matching specific offers and requests for assistance;

(c) Examination of how the concept of Mobile Biomedical Units (MBUs) might contribute to effective assistance, response and preparedness

(d) Training and Exercises, both national and with international elements, aimed at testing readiness; and

(e) Overlap and linkage with Article-X, recognizing that strengthening surveillance, detection and response capacities of national health systems would help to tackle both infectious disease outbreaks of a natural origin and also enhance preparedness to mitigate the consequences of deliberate bio-events.

3. Mr. Ladanov and Ms. Dyomina focused their remarks on the Russian proposal on MBUs, which could be deployed under the aegis of BWC Article VI, VII and X. Additionally, it was suggested that such assets could also be listed in the Article VII database. Mr. Ladanov elaborated on the MBU concept from a diplomatic perspective, while Ms. Dyomina outlined its technical features and operational details.

4. Mr. Ladanov recalled that Russia and the UK had been co-operating in the BWC on promoting the examination of the best way forward for emergency assistance and Article VII measures. He suggested two possible options for operationalising the MBU concept: first, such units may be established by States Parties centrally as part of the BWC Secretariat; and second, to assign nationally operated and funded rapid response teams to the BWC, that perform their nationally mandated tasks as part of their regular routine but are committed by the respective governments to also engage in BWC related activities if required.

5. Ms. Dyomina illustrated the example of a broad category of mobile units in the form of Specialised Anti-epidemic Teams operated by Russia's Health Protection Agency/Rospotrebnadzor. Being an integral part of the national anti-plague system they have accumulated a considerable amount of expertise in monitoring, evaluation and response under various conditions and situations including emergency environment. Such units have taken part in mitigating over 120 public health emergencies both nationally and abroad. Their operations are distinguished by high mobility, self-sufficiency, multi-purpose functionality, employment of high-tech equipment, observance of bio-safety norms, modular deployment approach, and diversified training of their personnel.

6. Mr. Hammond provided an exposé of the UK Public Health Rapid Support Team that has three primary objectives, to respond to outbreaks, to undertake and promote research, and to build capacity. He stressed that the work of the Rapid Support Team fits well with Article VII of the BWC and is designed to provide support and assistance to States Parties and to international organizations – anywhere in the world where it is needed. He explained that deployment of these teams is usually initiated by one of four mechanisms: (1) a direct bilateral request to UK; (2) mobilisation at the request of an international body like World

Health Organization, European Union or the Global Outbreak and Response Network (GOARN); (3) mobilisation as part of an initiative by the UK's Medical emergency Teams; and (4) a direct offer to the affected country in cases where UK believes that it can add value to a response.

7. Following the remarks by the panellists, an interactive Q&A session ensued. The debate was mostly focussed on the following themes:

(a) The dimension of investigation, especially attribution and forensics related to deliberate outbreaks. During the exchange of views between the panellists and the participants, it became apparent that both the Russian Federation and the UK approach the assistance function (under Article VII) as a medical emergency from a humanitarian perspective. Although it involves an *epidemiological* investigation, it is not primarily concerned with the investigation of *alleged use* from a law enforcement or attribution perspective, which would be undertaken by separate government agencies and departments. It was also pointed out that the investigation of alleged use is covered under a different Article of the Convention.

(b) The potential involvement of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), in accordance with the letter and spirit of Article VII, was identified as another area that required further clarification. Many participants emphasized that the operational framework for Article VII should ensure the prompt delivery of assistance, independent from any potential political discussions in the UNSC that could cause delays. It was also recognized that it would be extremely hard at the initial stages of the emergency to determine the origin in a manner that could definitively distinguish between a natural and deliberate outbreak.

8. Wrapping up the discussions, the moderator pointed out that MX-4 established under the current BWC Inter-Sessional Programme (ISP) provided an ideal opportunity for detailed consideration of the various practical themes, outlined in paragraph 2 above, where concrete deliverables could be narrowed down for potential decisions at the ninth BWC Review Conference in 2021. He noted the promising potential for consensus on those aspects that would help operationalise the implementation of Article VII and improve its synergy with Article X. He specifically highlighted the MBU concept that could serve as a practical tool to deliver effective assistance to affected States Parties invoking Article VII.

9. The discussion in the breakout session was quite rich, interactive and substantive. It provided a useful opportunity to various stakeholders – ranging from diplomats, practitioners, non-governmental experts and academics – to share views and develop a better understanding of the relevant issues. It would contribute to the development of further convergences among the BWC community on the topic of Preparedness, response and assistance.

10. This is a summarized account of the discussions prepared by the moderator in his personal capacity and under his own responsibility, and might not necessarily reflect the views of all the participants.

Discussion session on institutional strengthening of the BWC

1. The session was devoted to the discussion of any approaches, legally binding or otherwise, to strengthen the BWC. It was facilitated by Vladimir Ladanov, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Russia, who prepared this summary reflecting his personal account of the discussion. The members of the panel offering introductory remarks were: Richard Lennane, Geneva Disarmament Platform, James Revill, UNIDIR, Dmitry Poklonsky, Ministry of Defence of Russia, and Clemens Bektikusuma, Indonesia's Mission to the UN in Geneva.
2. The need to put the implementation of the Convention on a sustainable footing was often echoed in the exchange. The current situation whereby there are so few institutional pillars to strengthen the BWC was felt to be far from being satisfactory. However, several challenges and obstacles to achieving progress were mentioned.
3. An obvious elephant in the room was the BWC's past and the failure of States Parties in the 1990s to negotiate a comprehensive legally binding instrument concerning all of its provisions, a Protocol to Strengthen the Convention. It was repeatedly stressed that a very large number of States Parties, including the Non-Aligned Movement but not only, continue to be committed to the Protocol-based approach of enhancing the effectiveness of the Convention. At the same time, participants clearly recognised that there was currently no overarching consensus to pursue it. Even though no solution to that problem was readily available, it was suggested that a Protocol model should remain a long-term aspiration that may be brought closer by States Parties exercising a give-and-take diplomacy and aiming for compromise.
4. The benefits of dealing with the strengthening of the BWC in a holistic and balanced manner were underlined. In this respect, the risks of cherry picking or selective approach to addressing the deficiencies of the BWC's implementation were made known. In the latter case the vision of the bigger picture may become lost and negotiations reduced to match making between and among various individual proposals or initiatives put forward by States Parties.
5. At the same time, it was suggested that States Parties should make progress with their nurturing of the Treaty and pursue a more pragmatic incremental approach to its strengthening, namely identifying and developing compromise on the practical proposals if and when agreement may be emerging. In doing so States Parties may benefit from examining developments in relevant arms control and non-proliferation organisations. It was also stated that potential stopgap and immediate solutions should not be considered as substituting the need for a comprehensive legally binding instrument.
6. Political acceptance from States Parties was referred to as a key element in achieving progress in building institutional support for the BWC. Funding commitments to pay for expanded activities were assumed to follow agreement on the substance and utility of the proposed measures.
7. A recurring thought in the discussion was that to achieve success institutions have to be built in a way that meets concerns of all States Parties. A relevant example that was mentioned was the Implementation Support Unit established in 2006 with a mandate constituting a compromise between the aspirations and agendas of different stakeholders. Since then its activities were responding to the needs of all States Parties thereby ensuring support and repeated resumption of its mandate.
8. A need for the BWC to keep up-to-date with the rapid pace of science and technology developments was also emphasised. In that regard an institution on the potential wish-list was mentioned several times, namely a Scientific Advisory Committee to provide specialised advice to all States Parties to better equip them to ensure effective implementation of the Convention.
9. A prevailing feeling among the participants was that the BWC needed institutional strengthening to safeguard promoting its purpose – to make sure that biological agents are never used as weapons. To make it happen all stakeholders should engage in dialogue with an open mind focused on deliverables and the ways of achieving them and in doing so guided by the aim of guaranteeing a sustainable well-being of the Convention.

Discussion session on expectations from the Ninth Review Conference

1. The facilitator of the session was Ambassador Dr. György Molnár, Special Representative for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, who served as the President of the previous, Eighth Review Conference (RevCon) of the BWC in 2016. The panelist was Mr. Daniel Feakes, the Chief of the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU).

2. In their introductory remarks, the facilitator and the panelist provided background information on the mandate of RevCons, the preparatory process, the decisions to be taken in advance of the next RevCon, procedural and administrative issues, as well as the preparations for, the conduct and the outcome of the Eighth RevCon. They reminded participants that in accordance with Article XII of the Convention the task of RevCons is to review the operation of the Convention, with a view to assuring that the purposes of the preamble and the provisions of Convention are being realized, and that such review *inter alia* shall take into account any new scientific and technological developments to the Convention.

3. They pointed out that aim of the session was to trigger some initial discussions on expectations for the Ninth RevCon. They emphasized that while we are still two years away from the Conference, it is important to begin planning as far in advance as possible, not least as some decisions need to be taken well in advance of the Conference. The panelist drew attention to the fact that due to the financial implications and the shortage of conference rooms during the planned reconstruction work in the UN Geneva Headquarters the Meeting of States Parties to be held in December should already agree on the dates of the 2021 RevCon and Preparatory Committee (PrepCom).

4. Regarding the Eighth RevCon, the facilitator drew attention to the innovative and substantive preparatory process. He pointed out that earlier RevCons had been preceded by short PrepComs dealing only with procedural issues. This 2016 preparatory process however, consisted of a PrepCom split into two sessions – a brief 1.5-day session in April 2016 focused on organizational issues and a resumed five-day session in August 2016 addressing also substantive issues in a general exchange of views, in a comprehensive consideration of all provisions of the Convention and cross-cutting issues. There was a record number of attending States Parties (114) and Working Papers (39) submitted by them. At the end of the meeting, the Chairman of the PrepCom presented a “summary report” under his own responsibility in which he synthesized the various proposals and the discussion with a view to facilitating preparations for the RevCon. In addition to the formal process in Geneva, there was a series of informal preparatory events, e.g. four regional workshops in Astana, Brasilia, New Delhi and Addis Ababa, and an international workshop in China.

5. As regards the three-week long RevCon, States Parties submitted another 44 working Papers, thereby generating a wealth of substantive proposals. In order to facilitate deliberations, the President was supported in his task by the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole, facilitators covering the Solemn Declaration, Assistance and cooperation, Science and technology, Implementation issues, Article III, Article VII, and the future Intersessional Programme and the ISU. In the course of the Review Conference, the President shared non-papers and also prepared a ‘President’s proposal’ in an effort to converge the different positions.

6. The RevCon succeeded to agree on the following substantive issues: to renew the mandate of the ISU; to continue the cooperation database established by the Seventh RevCon; to renew the sponsorship programme funded by voluntary contributions from States Parties; and to hold the Ninth RevCon in Geneva no later than 2021. Since the positions of the States Parties were far apart on a new substantive Intersessional Programme, to save the day the President put forward a compromise proposal mandating the 2017 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) to seek to reach consensus on an Intersessional Programme for 2018-2020. Thus, the window of opportunity was kept open and, under the able leadership of India, the 2017 MSP managed to agree on a substantive Intersessional Programme with five annual Meetings of Experts (MXP) and an annual MSP.

7. Concerning the current intersessional process it was emphasized that although States Parties could not agree to reflect the discussions that took place during the MXP in 2018 in the final report of their meeting in December last year, the MXP was characterized by substantive expert level discussions, which was an advance compared to the previous Intersessional Programme. It is also a positive sign that important financial decisions were taken last year at the MSP, which have put the Convention on a stronger and more solid footing.

8. During the discussion, participants raised the following points:

- There should be a closer linkage between the RevCon, the MSP and the MXPs;
- Proposals and working papers should be submitted early on to allow enough time to study them and formulate national positions on them;
- As a next step various proposals and working papers should be grouped and harmonized as much as possible to facilitate further work on them;
- The task of the ISU in producing these documents prior to the RevCon should be more precisely defined;
- The BWC and in particular the RevCon should be in a position to follow and address the ongoing microbiological revolution; In this context the increasing risk of using biological agents against crops and livestock was emphasized;
- To preserve its relevance the BWC should not only be able to take up individual cases, but to assess these developments and draw the necessary conclusions from them.

9. In his concluding remarks the facilitator expressed his hope that the ‘Sochi spirit’, which helped to lay a successful foundation for the 2018-2020 Intersessional Programme can also serve as a stepping stone for the Ninth RevCon. He underlined that the next RevCon represented an important opportunity for the Convention and expressed his hope that it would produce a rejuvenated BWC with its adaptability and relevance enhanced to face the challenges with which it would invariably be presented.
