

Information Note¹

- Event:** *Regional Workshop on National Implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention for Eastern Europe*
- Organizers:** The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) - Geneva, through the European Union's Action in Support of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC Action), and the Government of Ukraine, through the Ukrainian Biochemical Society
- Date and venue:** 27-29 May 2013, Kiev, Ukraine
- Participants:** *States:* Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Croatia, Georgia, Hungary, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Ukraine
- International organizations:* 1540 Committee Group of Experts; Biological Weapons Convention-Implementation Support Unit (BWC-ISU); European Union; INTERPOL; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); Science and Technology Center in Ukraine (STCU); United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI); United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA); World Health Organization (WHO)
- Non-Governmental Organizations, Industry, Academia, and Other Entities:* Agrarian University of Georgia; Georgian Biosafety Association; International Federation of Biosafety Associations (IFBA); Ukrainian Biochemical Society; Ukrainian Biosafety Association; University of Bradford, UK; VERTIC

1. **Objectives of the workshop**

The main objectives of the workshop were to enhance understanding of the BWC among national authorities, strengthen regional networking to promote implementation of the BWC, identification of requirements and needs for enhancing implementation of the BWC, and the creation of and/or support for national and regional biosafety associations. In order to reinforce capacities to implement the Convention at the national and regional level topics relevant to BWC implementation (such as legislation, control regimes, regulations, guidelines, enforcement and others) which are also overlapping significantly with the obligations under resolution 1540 (2004) and its provisions on domestic control of BW-related materials.

2. **Background**

The workshop is part of a series of such events to be organized in various regions under the auspices of the European Union Council's Decision in Support of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC Action) by the UNODA-Geneva (acting as the implementing agency) and national partners. The BWC Action was mandated by the Council decision 2012/421/CFSP, adopted on 23 July 2012 by the Council of the

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European Union. It is broadly anchored in the European Union's Common Position for the Seventh Review Conference of the BWC (Council Decision 2011/429/CFSP of 18 July 2011; available online at: [http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/\(httpAssets\)/FB77EE84B5729118C1257AC3003D9A5D/\\$file/Council+Decision+2011-429-CFSP+EU+Position+7RC.pdf](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/FB77EE84B5729118C1257AC3003D9A5D/$file/Council+Decision+2011-429-CFSP+EU+Position+7RC.pdf)) and focuses in particular on those aspects on which consensus was reached at the Seventh Review Conference held in 2011.

The BWC Action aims to support the BWC on the international, regional and national levels through three major projects: universality and national implementation; confidence in compliance; and strengthening international cooperation and encouraging international discussion on the future of the BWC.

The workshop was organized in five sessions; roundtable discussions followed the formal presentations based on pre-determined questions related to national implementation and CBMs; biorisk management, biosafety and biosecurity; developments in science & technology; and national and regional preparedness. Participants were asked inter alia to answer the question whether States should *“coordinate CBRN legislation (omnibus CBRN law, a CBW law, a BTWC Act or manifold laws covering BTWC obligations (e.g. penal law, customs/border control, quarantine, human/animal/plant health etc.) and how to address overlap/synergies between BTWC, UNSCR 1540, IHR (2005), CWC”*.

Participants noted that States may benefit from having access to guides on effective practices of BWC and resolution 1540 implementation, similar to the guides developed by OSCE on a number of topics. Regional compilations of effective practices based on national experiences would also be beneficial and they should consider addressing relevant synergies and overlap between the requirements of BWC, resolution 1540 (2004), International Health Regulations (IHRs), and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), as appropriate.

3. **Highlights**

Ms. Judit Körömi, BWC Chair and Special Representative of the Foreign Minister for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-proliferation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hungary, delivered the keynote address. She emphasized the rapid regional advancements in biotechnology which have tremendous potential benefits for Eastern Europe development and the increase in trade as well as in the exchange of personnel, equipment, technology and know-how in the region. Ms. Körömi noted that the BWC has an important role to play in developing regional capabilities for governance and control including coordination of efforts, within and across national systems, and incorporating the capacities and contributions of the different sectors.

The BWC Chair emphasized that the Seventh Review Conference has provided States Parties *“with a range of materials and tools with which to take forward the implementation of the BWC”* and it is important *“to act on that, through the intersessional programme, through domestic action, and through cooperation with other States Parties and with partners such as WHO, INTERPOL, the scientific and professional community, industry, NGOs and civil society”*.

The theme of Ms. Körömi's BWC chairmanship in 2013 is to *“bring in more voices”* to improve the process of preparing for the intersessional meetings, make more efficient and productive use of BWC meeting time, and enhance the practical value of the program to States Parties. As the Chair of the 2013 BWC Meetings, Ms. Körömi's efforts are directed toward increasing the number of States Parties actively participating in the BWC meetings; broadening the range of participation within national delegations; extending engagement with states not party; and by continuing to engage the scientific community, academia, industry and relevant NGOs. The BWC Chair urged the participants to play their part *“in shaping the future of the Biological Weapons Convention and to take specific, effective steps to reduce the risks posed to international security by biological weapons”*.

During the workshop, states such as Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Croatia, Georgia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, and Ukraine presented or discussed their BWC implementation measures. Several States (including Belarus, Croatia, Georgia, and Moldova) emphasized the synergies between resolution 1540 (2004) and the BWC obligations. Other States, such as Belarus, underscored effective practices in developing a National Implementation Action Plan for resolution 1540 implementation (which helped starting and managing the legislative process for meeting the obligations of both BWC and resolution 1540) while Croatia discussed the upcoming peer review process with Poland in the context of 1540 implementation which may also serve to review BWC implementation in each participating country.

The 1540 expert presented on “*United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 and the Biological Weapons Convention: Synergy and Convergence*” and on “*Biological Risk Management and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540: Ways and Means for Implementation and Technical Assistance*”, respectively. She also co-chaired roundtable discussions for the workshop session on “*National Implementation and Confidence Enhancing Measures*” which was focused on the BWC legislative and regulatory framework, BWC National Authority, Aim and Role of Confidence-building Measures (CBMs), and the Process for submission of CBMs. In her presentation reviewing the requests and offers for assistance in the bio area, the 1540 expert noted that there are no *Assistance Programmes and Offers from International, Regional and Subregional Organizations and Other Arrangements* specifically on the bio area of resolution 1540 implementation since organizations such as WHO, OIE and FAO have not registered with the 1540 committee as potential assistance providers, within their mandates. In addition, there is no formal coordination or sharing of experiences between the BWC ISU and the 1540 committee with regard to their respective assistance match-making roles on assistance. The 1540 expert also noted that in her opinion, strengthening the coordination and sharing of experiences is likely to benefit the respective assistance processes and maximize the use of limited resources while assisting States to effectively deal with countering biological threats.

4. **Additional comments**

For further information, please contact the 1540 Committee’s Group of Experts by e-mail at 1540experts@un.org.