

**2008 Meeting
Geneva, 1-5 December 2008**

**Meeting of Experts
Geneva, 18-22 August 2008**

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of national, regional and
international measures to improve biosafety
and biosecurity, including laboratory safety
and security of pathogens and toxins**

**REGIONAL SEMINAR FOR SOUTH EAST ASIA ON PROMOTING AND
IMPLEMENTING BIOSAFETY AND BIOSECURITY**

Submitted by Indonesia and Norway

1. A regional seminar for South East Asia on promoting and implementing biosafety and biosecurity was held in Jakarta 4-5 June 2008. The seminar was co-hosted by Indonesia, Norway, and the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit (ISU), with Det Norske Veritas (DNV) and the Eijkman Institute for Molecular Biology as technical organizers. More than 70 representatives from 17 countries took part in the seminar. The seminar also benefited from substantive contributions by the World Health Organization, the Asia-Pacific Biosafety Association, and academia.
2. Besides rich discussions and presentations, the seminar was greatly enriched by a visit to the BSL 3 laboratory at the Eijkman Institute in Jakarta.
3. The seminar facilitated an exchange of both views and experiences among the participants. The seminar did not negotiate any outcome documents, but the conveners of the event made the following observations:
 - (i) There is a clear need among countries in the region to further enhance their capabilities in addressing challenges such as emerging and re-emerging diseases which affect human, animal and plant health.
 - (ii) Capabilities must be adapted to local needs, taking into account the complexities involved in setting up new laboratories, as well as the challenges associated with construction, on-going maintenance and running costs.

- (iii) Increased co-operation between countries in the region was encouraged, in order to make full use of existing capabilities and resources.
- (iv) The process of improving research capabilities with new and well established laboratories was welcomed, but it was also recognised that this process may pose certain dangers regarding handling of highly hazardous biological materials.
- (v) It was noted that only limited information is available in terms of the number, location and safety / security levels of laboratories in this region.
- (vi) Adequate systems to address biosafety and biosecurity are critical in overcoming these challenges. This would involve physical structures, strong commitment by senior management, development of safety and security procedures and training.
- (vii) It was affirmed that countries in the region should learn from each other's experiences. Experience from the Eijkman Institute is of particular relevance.
- (viii) It was noted that other recent initiatives and in particular the development of the Laboratory Biorisk Management Standard (CWA 15793) provide an opportunity to address many areas of concern regarding proliferation of biological weapons and intentional misuse.
- (ix) External certification and audit would improve safety and security standards.
- (x) The human element is the crucial part of the chain for many aspects of biosafety and biosecurity: good facilities and procedures are not sufficient if personnel are not adequately trained and do not clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.
- (xi) A number of actors have important roles in promoting biological safety and security: governments, professional organisations, research institutions, international organisations, and international networks such as regional biological safety associations. Partnerships are encouraged.
- (xii) The importance of national regulations based on international and regional standards was recognised.
- (xiii) There is a need to address the challenges posed by transport of dangerous material, including the ability to safely, securely and cost effectively ship samples and cultures by air.
- (xiv) It was noted that fully implementing the obligations set by the BTWC and the UN Security Council resolution 1540 is an essential component in providing biosafety and biosecurity.
- (xv) Participants noted with satisfaction that most countries in the regions are States Parties to the BTWC, yet it was underlined that not all relevant stake-holders and actors are fully aware of the BTWC norm.

- (xvi) Codes of conduct can contribute to increasing awareness and commitment towards the BTWC. Such codes should be flexible and adapted to local circumstances, while retaining a core message.
 - (xvii) It was recognised that the BTWC aims not only to promote non-proliferation, but also peaceful co-operation in biological sciences, while also taking note of the role of the BTWC in relation to other institutions such as the WHO, FAO and OIE.
 - (xviii) States parties are encouraged to provide annual confidence-building measures (CBMs) under the BTWC in order to enhance transparency.
 - (xix) The BTWC ISU can play an important role in facilitating enhanced co-operation and assistance among BTWC state parties in the region.
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