

Monday 10th December 2007

The Meeting of States Parties: Continuation of 12 months of progress

An eventful year

The 2007 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) being held this week comes at the end of a 12-month period which has seen considerable progress in relation to the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC/BWC). The Sixth five-yearly Review Conference for the Convention, which was held from 20 November to 8 December 2006, resulted in a positive outcome – unlike the fifth, in 2001, which had to be suspended and reconvened a year later. A major component of this successful outcome was agreement on a second ‘inter-sessional process’ – a work programme between Review Conferences – to cover the period 2007-10.

The programme for each year of this process covers a different set of topics. The topics for discussion in 2007 are ‘Ways and means to enhance national implementation, including enforcement of national legislation, strengthening of national institutions and coordination among national law enforcement institutions’ and ‘Regional and sub-regional cooperation on BWC implementation’. The MSP may also discuss ‘universalisation and comprehensive implementation of the Convention’. Comprehensive implementation would include such topics as national implementation, scientific and technological developments, confidence-building measures (CBMs), and coordination with other international bodies.

The MSP was preceded by a one-week Meeting of Experts (MX) in August. The MX was of a much more positive character than any of the meetings of the first inter-sessional process, with a much friendlier atmosphere. In part this was due to the relatively uncontroversial nature of the topics under discussion.

The MX heard presentations from many States Parties on their experiences and their plans for national implementation of the Convention and for regional co-operation related to this. A number of proposals and ideas were put forward and these were compiled into a ‘synthesis paper’ by the Chairman of the MX, Ambassador Masood Khan (Pakistan) who had also been President of the Sixth Review Conference.

Background materials on the 2006 Review Conference can be found on the BWPP website at <<<http://www.bwpp.org/6RevCon/6thRevConResources.html>>>, on the MX at <<<http://www.bwpp.org/2007%20MX/MX2007Resources.html>>>, and on the MSP at <<<http://www.bwpp.org/2007MSP/MSP2007Resources.html>>>.

Issues of national implementation

National implementation is a complex process which can be broken down into three broad areas of activity – legislative, monitoring and enforcement. How each of these areas is carried out has to be dependent on the context and constitutional arrangements within each

State Party. This can sometimes make it difficult to transfer specific examples of implementation efforts from one country to another.

While legislative activities have been the focus of particular attention in recent years – and an increasing number of States Parties have introduced specific BTWC legislation – the introduction of new laws has to be accompanied by the relevant resources and efforts to ensure effective implementation. To this end, each State Party must have an understanding of what relevant activities are taking place in territories under their jurisdiction or control. To do this, monitoring efforts must be implemented, as well as awareness-raising efforts to ensure that relevant individuals and institutions – such as those within academia and industry – know which of their activities fall within the remit of the laws. Enforcement activities must be carried out as both a deterrent and to ensure that when breaches of standards do occur they are dealt with effectively and appropriately.

Issues of regional cooperation

In recent years a number of regional and sub-regional forums have been host to discussions on the political, security and economic benefits of being a party to the Convention and on its effective implementation. A number of regional seminars have been held in recent years.

Implementation Support Unit

An 'Implementation Support Unit' (ISU) was established by the Review Conference to provide support to States Parties. The ISU divides its work into four areas: administrative support, Confidence-Building Measures, support for national implementation, and universalization. The report of the ISU's activities since its establishment has been put up on their website: <<<http://www.unog.ch/bwc>>> and is also available through the UN documents server <<<http://documents.un.org>>> (document reference BWC/MSP/2007/3).

Progress on Universalization

The Review Conference took a decision on 'Promotion of Universalization' to encourage countries outside of the BTWC to join the Convention. Four additional countries became States Parties to the BTWC between the Review Conference and the 2007 Meeting of Experts – Kazakhstan (28 June), Trinidad and Tobago (19 July) and Gabon (17 August) joined as new parties while Montenegro announced its succession to the Convention, which it considers to have taken effect from 3 June 2006, the date of its independence.

It is clear from efforts and consultations made by the Chairman of the Meeting of Experts and the ISU that a number of further states are well advanced in their processes to accede to or ratify the Convention in the relatively near future. Some of the providers of voluntary assistance to BTWC states parties for enhancing national implementation, such as the European Union, have also indicated that they may be willing to also offer such assistance to countries in the run-up to their joining the Convention.

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Tuesday 11th December 2007

The Meeting of States Parties: The opening day

The 2007 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) for the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC/BWC) opened on Monday morning with Ambassador Masood Khan (Pakistan) in the Chair. On the screen at the front of the room as the meeting started was the slogan ‘from adjacency to synergy’ – a theme that was to reappear through the day’s proceedings.

After dealing with a number of routine procedural issues, Amb. Khan opened the meeting noting that much of the work to be done had to do with enhancement of individual and collective capacity. He identified 3 ‘critical areas’ – synergy, inclusiveness and transparency.

The Chairman then turned the floor over to representatives of three international organizations who spoke in the following order. José Sumpsi, Assistant Director-General, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) spoke of the FAO’s approach in the areas of animal health, plant health and food safety and spoke of the possibilities of effective collaborative work between international bodies. David Heymann, Assistant Director-General, World Health Organization (WHO) spoke of the latest International Health Regulations, which entered into force earlier this year, and the requirements relating to informing of outbreaks of particular diseases. Bernard Vallat, Director-General, World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) spoke of the role of the OIE in helping reduce the impacts of disease in animals.

General Debate

The General Debate followed immediately. Statements were made by Portugal (on behalf of the EU), Cuba (on behalf of the Group of Non-Aligned States), Canada (on behalf of the JACKSNNZ), Iran, Republic of Korea, China, the United States, Libya, and Turkey in the morning plenary session. After lunch, Brazil (on behalf of a number of Latin American states), Saudi Arabia, Australia, South Africa, India, Morocco, Russia, Indonesia, Iraq, Algeria, Malaysia and Sudan gave plenary statements. (Where the plenary statements were accompanied by a printed version of the text, these will be placed on the BWPP website at the address given overleaf.) The general debate is to continue on Tuesday.

Many statements included details of new implementation measures adopted or undertaken by states parties or of particular efforts for regional or sub-regional co-operation, such as seminars or other events.

A number of states welcomed the establishment of the ISU. Some states expressed a desire to see the efforts of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) enhanced through voluntary offers of assistance. Reflecting, perhaps, a sensitivity to the possibility that the ISU should not be seen as a ‘seed’ from which a future international organization may grow, the United States made specific reference in its statement to the ‘strict

delineation of the ISU operations which was the basis of the compromise text of the mandate' and stated that if voluntary offers of funding were to be made, they should be to support 'the three-person ISU' for its assigned tasks and not to 'expand that mandate into new, unauthorized areas'. In diplomatic terms, the strength of phrasing is notably forceful.

The prompt for this was an EU working paper on possible ISU assistance, prepared by the Netherlands, that was published as WP.3. Noting the limited resources available to the ISU 'and taking into account the tasks the ISU is tasked to perform', the paper states, 'the EU stands ready to provide additional financial assistance to support specific activities and projects of the ISU'. The paper suggests four areas of possible activity – 'Implementation, cooperation and assistance', 'CBMs', 'Universality' and 'Outreach'. The contents of the first three of these seem to provoke little controversy. The principle of the last of these does not appear to be at issue, however the possible scale of activity is. For example, among the list of possible activities is a suggestion that the ISU could organize something similar to the OPCW Academic Forum. This Forum, which was funded by the government of the Netherlands as one of a series of events to mark the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, brought together some 250 participants for two days to discuss a range of CWC-related issues. Such an event would indeed be a significant effort for such a small and recently established body as the ISU, even if the event was totally externally funded. However, it should be noted that the Dutch paper is merely a list of possibilities and that consideration was being given for the EU and its member states 'to provide additional funding for one or several of the above-mentioned activities' across the four areas of activity.

It is worth noting that the decision within the US to agree to the establishment of the ISU was taken very shortly before the Review Conference as it was contested by some in the governmental system in that country.

NGO Roundtable

A trial of a new procedure for interactions between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and delegates was carried out on Monday afternoon. A roundtable discussion was convened on the theme of 'Practical contributions of civil society to national implementation and regional co-operation'

Graham Pearson (University of Bradford), Angela Woodward (VERTIC), Filippa Lentzos (LSE), Kathryn Nixdorff (INES), Marie Chevrier (Scientists Working Group) and Jean Pascal Zanders (BWPP) joined Ambassador Khan around the tables in the centre of the room. Each of the NGO representatives gave an introduction to the activities and perspectives of their organizations. A question and answer session followed in which delegates asked questions of the panel. As this was a new method of working, there were three caveats emphasised by the Chairman of the Meeting – the roundtable was not to be recorded in the official report of the Meeting of States Parties; that it was not to be considered as a precedent; and that there was no change of status of anyone in the room.

After the roundtable, three NGOs gave statements in what might now be described as the 'traditional' way – DePaul University, Partnership for Global Security and the University of Bradford. Further NGO statements are expected on Tuesday.

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Wednesday 12th December 2007

The Second Day: Down to business

The 2007 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) for the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC/BWC) continued on Tuesday with an opening statement from Ronald Noble, Secretary-General of Interpol, who spoke of the bioterrorism work of his organization, including its desktop exercises and its 'train the trainers' programme.

In the afternoon, Rogelio Pfirter, Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons – the international body for the Chemical Weapons Convention – addressed the Meeting. He noted that there were a number of similarities between the two arms control regimes in that both deal with materials that could be used for either hostile or for peaceful purposes and that both face challenges of national implementation and universality.

General Debate

The General Debate followed immediately from the Interpol statement in the morning, with Nigeria, Germany, the Netherlands, and Pakistan making plenary statements. A signatory state, the United Arab Emirates, also made a statement.

Germany highlighted its understanding that many states parties link BTWC national implementation with their 'National Authority' established under the CWC and that this was the motivation for German financial assistance to allow members of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) to participate in the recent annual meeting of CWC National Authorities. The Netherlands focused specifically on its Working Paper about voluntary assistance for the ISU (discussed in *MSP report #2*) and highlighted that the paper 'provides a list of options States Parties might consider'. Pakistan noted that it had established a 'national focal point' for the BTWC which is now maintaining a 'National Information Database' on BWC implementation and which holds quarterly meetings of relevant stakeholders.

As before, where the plenary statements are accompanied by a printed version of the text, these will be placed on the BWPP website at the address given overleaf. This would appear to complete the general debate, although it is always possible that other states may wish to make an open statement later in the proceedings.

NGO statements

The morning's formal plenary was suspended for a short time to allow three NGOs to make statements as there had been insufficient time on Monday afternoon to hear them all. Pax

Christi International, the Research Group for Biological Arms Control, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom made statements.

Working sessions

After the NGO statements in the morning and after the OPCW statement in the afternoon, the Meeting moved into private 'Working sessions' dealing with Agenda Item 6 – 'Consideration of ways and means to enhance national implementation, including enforcement of national legislation, strengthening of national institutions and coordination among national law enforcement institutions'. Most of the statements made in these two sessions were either in relation to countries' own developments of their implementation measures or were in relation to Working Papers that had been submitted to the Meeting.

Although a longer time than had initially been planned for was spent on the General Debate, the Meeting is still broadly following the draft programme of work included in document BWC/MSP/2007/2.

Working Papers

As noted above, a number of working papers have been put forward by states parties and are available on paper in Geneva. However, only four of these had been made available electronically on the UN documents server by Tuesday night. A brief analysis of the working papers published so far will appear in the next of these reports. (Those documents that have been published electronically are now available from the BWPP MSP Resources web page.)

Side Event

Tuesday's lunchtime seminar, entitled 'Reaching out to the Final 36 – Overcoming Obstacles to the Universalization of the BTWC', was convened by the BioWeapons Prevention Project. This was the first side event of the Meeting of States Parties.

Ambassador Masood Khan (Pakistan), Chairman of the Meeting of States Parties, introduced the topic with a short presentation entitled 'Universalizing the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention'. This was followed by a presentation on 'Surveying Universalization of the BTWC: Preliminary Results' by Kathryn McLaughlin (BWPP). A number of short prepared interventions were then given. Richard Lennane of the BWC Implementation Support Unit spoke on 'Despatches from the front: lessons learned from the 2007 universalization campaign'. Australian Ambassador Caroline Millar talked on 'Australia's universalization strategy in the Asia-Pacific region'. Ambassador José Pereira Gomes (Portugal, the current holder of the EU Presidency) spoke about 'The European Union's contribution to the goal of diversity'. Two members of the British delegation, Fiona Paterson and Jacqueline Daley, outlined 'The United Kingdom's initiatives and responsibilities as a depositary state'.

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Thursday 13th December 2007

The Third Day: Quiet progress

The 2007 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) for the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC/BWC) continued on Wednesday. The day began with a presentation from the European Commission on its Bio-preparedness Green Paper that was adopted on 11 July. This Green Paper covers preparedness for natural, accidental and deliberate incidents, following an 'all-hazards' approach.

The Chairman, Ambassador Masood Khan (Pakistan), then read out a short statement on behalf of the Meeting regarding the terrorist acts in Algiers on Tuesday, which killed many people, including a number of UN personnel, offering 'our condolences and deepest sympathy to the Government and people of Algeria ... [and] our sympathy for the hundreds of injured and the bereaved and traumatized families of the victims'.

Working sessions

After the condolences, the Meeting moved into a private 'working session'. One presentation was given on Agenda Item 6 that relates to national implementation. A number of presentations were then made on Agenda Item 7 – 'Consideration of regional and sub-regional cooperation on implementation of the Convention'. Most of the statements made in this session were about regional activities various states parties had been involved with. As all states parties wishing to make contributions under Agenda Item 7 were able to do these in the morning, the afternoon session did not take place.

Universalization Report

The 'Report of the Chairman on Universalization Activities' (BWC/MSP/2007/4) was made available to the Meeting (although it carries the date of 11 December). This paper gives a state-by-state summary of contacts and interactions with states that are not party to the BTWC and includes an Annex listing countries that are states parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention but not party to the BTWC. The paper notes that five states are reported to be 'well advanced' in the ratification process and a further eight are reported to have begun the process.

The Synthesis Paper

Some questions were raised on Tuesday in one of the closed sessions about how the Chairman's 'Synthesis Paper' (BWC/MSP/2007/L.1) should be handled in the final report of the Meeting. For example, should the report highlight particular aspects of the paper or simply include it as an annex?

In 2003 – the first year of the first inter-sessional process – there was no process for summarizing the proposals arising within the meetings. The result was an annex of over

150 pages of verbatim records of proposals which experience quickly showed was nearly unworkable as a tool to focus attention of busy officials. In 2004 there was a recognition that a different method should be found. However, opening up a debate on which items should be placed in any particular order could become a possible distraction from the important subject matter. Thus the idea of papers written by the Chairman of that year's meetings was conceived. Two papers were prepared – a simple list of proposals distilled from the many contributions to the Meeting of Experts followed by a much shorter synthesis of the ideas contained therein. When it came to adopting the final report of the 2004 MSP, the two papers were included as annexes with the following proviso: 'These annexes were not discussed or agreed upon and consequently have no status'. The 2005 meetings followed a similar arrangement, although the list of proposals was only appended to the report of the Meeting of Experts. Again the synthesis paper appended to the MSP report had 'no status'.

The benefits of highlighting particular aspects of the Chairman's Synthesis Paper are clear in that this would help focus the attention of officials dealing with the subject matter. However, this benefit must be balanced against the possibility that coming to a consensus conclusion in a large meeting on what areas to highlight could take some time.

NGO Roundtable feedback

The novel roundtable arrangement for interactions between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and delegates on Monday afternoon in which each of the NGO representatives outlined practical contributions to the topics in 2007 from the perspective of their organizations seems to have been well received.

There is already some discussion between some delegates and NGO representatives as to how this concept might best be adapted to next year's Meeting of Experts as certain aspects of the topics, such as biosecurity, have a highly technical character. The Chairman for next year's meetings is expected to be announced imminently. There is only one candidate so far for the position from the Eastern Group.

Side Event

Wednesday's lunchtime seminar, entitled 'Building Confidence in the Biological & Toxin Weapons Convention: The Way Forward', was convened by the Geneva Forum – a joint initiative of the Quaker United Nations Office, the UN Institute for Disarmament Research and the Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies (IUHEI).

The seminar heard presentations from Richard Lennane (BWC Implementation Support Unit), Filippa Lentzos (LSE) and Ambassador Jürg Streuli (Switzerland). The event marked the launch of a new report – 'National Data Collection Processes for CBM Submissions' – sponsored by the Swiss Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sports. The report, written by Filippa Lentzos and Angela Woodward (VERTIC), is available via <<<http://www.vertic.org/news.asp#bwcbm>>>.

Working Papers

The analysis of working papers is held over to the next *MSP report* for reasons of space.

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Friday 14th December 2007

The Fourth Day: Drawing towards a conclusion

Industry Panel

The 2007 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) for the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC/BWC) continued on Thursday starting with a panel composed of people connected with the biological industries in an open session while the formal Meeting was suspended. This gave the session the same sort of status that the NGO roundtable had at the beginning of the week, although this panel was not preceded by strong caveats.

The panel, each of whom was speaking in their personal capacity, was composed of: Terence Taylor, Director, International Council for the Life Sciences; Leila Oda, President, National Biosafety Association of Brazil; Heinz Schwer, Chief Executive Officer, Sloning BioTechnology; and Rainer Wessel, Chief Executive Officer, Ganymed Pharmaceuticals. Some of the panellists also had strong connections with industry associations. Each gave a short introduction on their perspectives on issues relevant to the topics under discussion in the Meeting. There then followed a lively question and answer session, much of which also included biosecurity and awareness-raising topics that are to be discussed at next year's meetings. There was also some discussion on how industry and academia should be involved in the coming meetings, with some suggestions of greater involvement such as had happened at the 2005 Meetings at which awareness-raising and codes of conduct were last discussed.

Working sessions

After the industry panel, the meeting moved into another closed 'working session' which started with some additional presentations on the national implementation and regional cooperation topics. After a short break, draft texts of the final report were circulated. As has happened before, the report was circulated in two parts. The first is procedural and uncontroversial. The second covers the substantive/policy issues. Unlike earlier MSPs, the substantive part seems to be raising little concern. Most delegates spoken with for this *MSP report* indicated they were comfortable overall with what has been suggested. The two states parties that have most often raised significant objections to final report drafts – Iran and the USA – both seem broadly content although it is likely each will want to suggest some changes to the language used.

Working Papers

Eight Working Papers have so far been circulated within the Meeting. All are short, with most being only a few pages long.

- WP.1 – 'The BTWC and Bioincident and Biocrime Database', Germany, 7 December, 2 pp.
- WP.2 – 'Legal Implementation and Enforcement', Germany (for EU), 7 December, 4 pp.

- WP.3 – ‘Supporting the BTWC Implementation Support Unit’, Netherlands (for EU), 7 December, 3 pp.
- WP.4 – ‘La Soumission des Mesures de Confiance (MDC)’ [The submission of Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs)], France (for EU), 7 December, 5 pp.
- WP.5 – ‘Assistance and Cooperation in the Framework of the Implementation and Universalization of the BTWC’, Portugal (for EU), 10 December, 5 pp.
- WP.6 – ‘Assistance activities for Implementing BTWC Legislation in Peru’, Portugal (for EU and Peru), 10 December, 3 pp.
- WP.7 – ‘Brazil’s National Program for the Promotion of Dialogue Between the Private Sector and the Government in Matters Related to Sensitive Assets (Pronabens)’, Brazil, 11 December, 3 pp.
- WP.8 – ‘Nigerian Experience of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention’, Nigeria, 13 December, 5 pp.

WP.1 illustrates a concern that quantitative analysis of certain types of biological incidents may not help implementation of the BTWC as any counting of natural outbreaks and hoax threats in circumstances where they are not evaluated as not a biological weapons threat can be misleading. This is a national paper, rather than one on behalf of the EU.

WP.2-6 are all from the EU and are mostly self-explanatory from their titles. The first of these discusses what might be included in effective national implementation arrangements. The second is the paper discussed in the earlier controversies with the EU (see *MSP report #2*). The third examines the new CBM handling arrangements through the ISU and notes that there has been a record number of CBM returns in 2007. The fifth relates to the EU Joint Action and describes the forms of assistance that the EU may give to states in implementation of the Convention. The paper also describes efforts under the Joint Action to bring new states into the Convention. The last of the EU papers, prepared with Peru, describes the work of a ‘Technical Assistance Visit’ to that country by four experts from the EU in the August 2007.

WP.7 describes the work of the Brazilian agency Pronabens, which has been taking a particular focus on raising awareness within that country’s industry and academic community of international obligations in the biological field.

WP.8 describes Nigeria’s experiences in its efforts to enhance its national implementation of the Convention.

A text has been agreed for a NAM Working Paper which lists ‘concrete actions’ which include national implementation across the whole of the BTWC, including Article X on technical co-operation. This paper will appear in the above series.

Side Event

Thursday’s lunchtime seminar, entitled ‘Running Multi-jurisdictional Bioterrorism Exercises: the Federal Response Planning Experience in Canada’, was convened by the Canadian mission. Steven Jones, Director of the Laboratory Response to Bioterrorism, National Microbiology Laboratory, Public Health Agency of Canada presented some experiences of a recent exercise, the results of which are currently being reviewed. Canada has indicated that any public report resulting from this review will be made available to the ISU for distribution to interested states parties. A press release on the exercise can be found at <<<http://www.jibc.ca/images/nationaldefense/pressRelease.pdf>>>.

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Monday 17th December 2007

The Final Day: Wrapping up the Meeting

The 2007 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) for the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC/BWC) wrapped up its proceedings on Friday.

A final report was agreed upon, although there were a number of last-minute objections from Iran that took some consultations to resolve. Some minor amendments were also suggested by India but these were essentially small changes. It became clear during the morning that Iran had not taken the opportunity to convey their suggestions for amendments to the Chairman of the Meeting, Ambassador Masood Khan (Pakistan), at the time he had called for informal consultations on his proposed draft text. While Ambassador Khan may have wanted his final public session in the chair to go without incident, it did offer him an opportunity to present another masterclass in how to bring together opposing viewpoints.

The Final Report

Within the final report, once agreed, the states parties 'recognised the value' of ensuring that national implementation measures 'penalize and prevent activities' that breach any of the prohibitions of the Convention – a text that had originally read 'criminalize, and specify penalties for, activity that breaches ...' until the text was reopened by Iran. The value was also recognised of including provisions to prohibit assisting others to breach the Convention, to strengthening national capacities, to have effective systems of export/import controls, and to hold 'regular national reviews' of adopted measures. However, national implementation should also 'avoid hampering the economic and technological development of States Parties, or international cooperation in the field of peaceful uses of biological science and technology'.

On the second topic of the Meeting, the report notes the states parties 'agreed on the value of regional and sub-regional efforts to, where appropriate' develop 'common approaches to implementing the Convention', 'engage regional resources', and 'include implementation of the Convention on the agendas of regional meetings and activities'.

While it is clear that not all concepts contained in the Chairman's 'Synthesis Paper' are applicable in all national contexts, it remains a useful checklist for those involved both in national implementation of the Convention or in promoting regional cooperation. The synthesis paper still has no formal status, as in previous years.

The 2008 Meetings

The Meeting agreed dates for the 2008 Meeting of Experts as 18 to 22 August and for the Meeting of States Parties as 1 to 5 December and confirmed that Ambassador Georgi Avramchev (The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) will be Chairman.

The 2008 Meetings are to discuss the topics of ‘National, regional and international measures to improve biosafety and biosecurity, including laboratory safety and security of pathogens and toxins’ and ‘Oversight, education, awareness raising, and adoption and/or development of codes of conduct with the aim to prevent misuse in the context of advances in bio-science and bio-technology research with the potential of use for purposes prohibited by the Convention.’

Reflections

A conscious effort is taken in writing these daily summaries to report the facts and not give opinion. However, there are many times that the question is raised – ‘so what do you think about what happened?’ The following are some personal reflections that do not necessarily represent anyone’s views other than the author’s own.

The week has gone remarkably well. There is a broad consensus on a wide range of issues. The atmosphere has been, overall, much more positive and friendly than the Meetings that occurred before last year’s Review Conference. The only issue that really raised the temperature was the disagreement over possible voluntary additional funding for activities of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU). Compared with disagreements of the past, this was a minor issue, yet it possibly holds some lessons for the future.

The vehemence of the US reaction to the paper prepared by the Netherlands on behalf of the EU surprised many. There were honestly held sensitivities on the US side about whether the delicately nuanced compromise about the ISU reached at the time of the Review Conference would be thrown out of balance, but the forcefulness by which this was expressed ran counter to the tone of the rest of the Meeting. The focus of the US reaction on the Netherlands was unnecessary when this was, after all, an EU paper. While there will be differences between the US and the EU on the role of international organizations in general, it is inconceivable that the EU would implement a decision that major partners in the BTWC would have been uncomfortable with. The hallmark of EU ‘soft power’ is bringing others on board, not antagonising them.

If an error was made, perhaps it was in not tailoring the message to the audience, so that those not familiar with EU processes would see the paper for what it really was – a think piece designed to elaborate the range of possible activities available, from which only some of the options would be taken after a chance to discuss them. The Dutch paper would not have looked out of place within the EU decision-making process. On the other hand, just as the US always expects that people dealing with the US government should have some understanding of how the inter-agency process works, perhaps it is time that key global players dealing with the EU familiarise themselves with some of the basics of its procedures, lest future misunderstandings occur.

Arguments over the ISU aside, some people have questioned whether much progress has been made since the Meeting of Experts in August this year. But progress on national implementation cannot be made in just a few months. Experience shows it can take many months or years simply to get a new instrument on the statute book and then further months or years to bring into force and effectively implement. The 2007 Meetings were part of a process has seen significant progress in implementation of the BTWC since the topic was discussed at the 2003 Meetings.

This is the sixth and final report from the Meeting of States Parties for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention which was held from 10 to 14 December 2007 in Geneva. The reports were prepared by Richard Guthrie on behalf of the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP).

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All of these reports will remain available on the BWPP website via a page dedicated to the Meeting of States Parties - <<<http://www.bwpp.org/2007MSP/MSP2007Resources.html>>>