

Thursday 9th December 2010

## The Third Day: the main topic of the meeting

The 2010 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) continued on Wednesday with further discussion of the main topic of the meeting: 'Provision of assistance and coordination with relevant organizations upon request by any State Party in the case of alleged use of biological or toxin weapons, including improving national capabilities for disease surveillance, detection and diagnosis and public health systems'. This topic had been divided into sub-topics, the first of which, 'aims and challenges', was discussed on Tuesday. The second and third, 'building national capacity' and 'preparing effective responses', were discussed on Wednesday. As there is overlap between the three sub-topics, the discussions on all three is covered in this report. A fourth sub-topic [which was left out in the introduction of yesterday's report owing to an editing error, apologies] relates to 'international partners and mechanisms' was scheduled for Thursday morning but some discussion on this sub-topic took place on Wednesday.

The draft procedural elements of the final report of the meeting were circulated in the room in the afternoon. These simply describe the practical aspects of convening the MSP and are thus uncontroversial. The substantive paragraphs which describe the discussion of the topic of the meeting have yet to be circulated and it is clear that consultations are taking place on what might be within them. Consultations are also continuing on the question of the budget for BWC activities in 2011, including the costs of running the Review Conference.

### **Structure of the synthesis paper**

Much of the discussion on the main topic followed the structure of the synthesis paper circulated by the Chairman in October (document BWC/MSP/2010/L.1). This is divided into sections reflecting the chosen sub-topics. The production of a synthesis paper after the Meeting of Experts has been a routing activity in the BWC inter-sessional process since 2004. As a document in the name of the Chairman, traditionally the synthesis paper is not debated in any detail. Indeed, the 2009 final report of the MSP described the synthesis paper in the following terms: 'synthesis of these considerations, lessons, perspectives, recommendations, conclusions and proposals ... attached to this report as Annex I. This annex was not proposed for adoption as an outcome of the Meeting, and therefore was not discussed with that aim. Thus, the annex was not agreed upon and consequently has no status'. Previous MSP reports used similar language.

Corridor discussions with some of the delegations raising questions, comments and suggestions for language in the synthesis paper indicated that many of these delegations were fully aware that the paper had no status as an official negotiated document. However, by discussing the text of this document, these delegations were able to send clear signals to other delegations and to those putting together text for the final report of the meeting on what language they wished to see in that report.

## **Main discussion**

There were a number of reminders that biological and toxin weapons can be used to target humans, animals and plants and so response capacities must reflect this. There were also reminders that there may be considerable delays between an outbreak being first observed and the recognition that it was deliberately induced. Many delegations spoke of efforts to coordinate activities across government: for example Brazil referred to a workshop it had held in November involving six ministries; the USA spoke of the need to develop law enforcement capacities and integrate these with response planning; and Australia raised the importance of developing a lead agency for management of outbreaks and of procedures for sharing information across and between governments. The role of earlier experiences and exercises was highlighted. A number of delegations mentioned the lessons learned from pandemic influenza control efforts. The need to implement lessons learned and take remedial action was recognized. On technical capacities it was noted that there was a difference between diagnosis of disease and detection of disease-causing agents. It was also noted there were differences between routine laboratory work and forensic laboratory analysis and there was a need to develop strong networks of laboratories.

Some particular points were raised within individual interventions. The Republic of Korea described protection activities relating to the G20 summit, including the use of mobile detection labs and syndromic surveillance. Russia introduced two working papers, one on the organization of efforts to prevent or contain outbreaks and the other on timely diagnosis of pathogens. Pakistan noted its CBM return should be completed 'soon' and that it was hosting a workshop on synthetic biology in February. A scientist from the Pasteur Institute of Iran, speaking as a member of that country's delegation, described the work of his institute in developing diagnostic kits for a variety of infectious diseases and indicated that the institute was experiencing difficulty in obtaining reference strains owing to international sanctions. Mexico noted that, in the event of a crisis, departments and agencies might need to have access to contingency funds and procedures to obtain these should be prepared in advance.

## **Side Events**

There were two side events on Wednesday. The first, in the morning before the start of the day's other proceedings, was convened by the organizers of the Beijing conference on science and technology trends held during 31 October-3 November. The event was introduced by Jo Husbands (US National Academy of Sciences). Presentations were given by two individuals who have been involved in the provision of scientific advice to policy makers at national and international levels for many years, Ralf Trapp and Bob Mathews, who spoke in their personal capacities on the issues discussed at the conference. The second event, held at lunchtime, was convened by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) on the subject 'Beyond the Global Eradication of Rinderpest'. Presentations were given by Keith Hamilton (OIE) on 'OIE, rinderpest and beyond', Chris Oura (OIE Reference Laboratory, Institute for Animal Health, Pirbright, UK) on 'The challenges of controlling animal diseases and their potential use as weapons of mass destruction' and Elizabeth Mumford (World Health Organization) on 'A case study: international collaboration to investigate the origin of pandemic H1N1 2009'.

*This is the fourth report from the Meeting of States Parties for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention which is being held from 6 to 10 December 2010 in Geneva. The reports are designed to help people who are not in Geneva to follow the proceedings. Copies are available via <<http://www.bwpp.org/reports.html>>.*

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