

Tuesday 2nd December 2014

## The first day: opening remarks and statements

The 2014 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) opened on Monday morning with Ambassador Urs Schmid of Switzerland in the Chair. He described the Meeting of Experts (MX) in August as having been ‘focused and constructive’ and expressed a hope that the MSP could be focused on ‘effective action’.

General debate statements were made during the morning session by Iran (for the non-aligned), Canada (for the ‘JACKSNNZ’ – [an informal grouping of Japan, Australia, Canada, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Norway and New Zealand]), Pakistan, Denmark, Russia, USA, China, Kuwait, Japan, Mali (its first statement to a BWC plenary), Malaysia, Bulgaria, India, Republic of Korea, Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Brazil and Ecuador. After lunch, statements were made by France, Finland, Turkey, Sweden, Argentina, Morocco, Mexico, Algeria, Kenya, Australia, Ghana, South Africa, Iraq, Colombia, Cuba, Thailand and Iran (national). The Chair noted that further delegations wished to take the floor so that the general debate would continue on Tuesday morning.

Following the national statements, non-governmental organizations addressed the meeting in an informal setting: the University of Bradford; the University of London; the University of Bath; the Research Group for Biological Arms Control, Hamburg University; the International Network of Engineers and Scientists; VERTIC; Pax Christi International; and the Biosecurity Working Group of the Inter-Academy Panel on International Issues. Owing to time constraints, these statements had to be delivered in a shortened form.

The Implementation Support Unit (ISU) has indicated it will place copies of statements provided to it on its website <<http://www.unog.ch/bwc>>.

There was much more detail on substantive issues than had been given in the general debate in the MSPs in 2012 and 2013; this might be connected with a focusing of minds in the run-up to the Eighth BWC Review Conference to be held in 2016. There were references to a need for practical action and desires to operationalize common understandings.

Much was said on the standing agenda items and biennial topics. Owing to limited space, this report will focus on other issues raised as proceedings on the specific topics are scheduled for later this week; material on those topics from statements in the general debate can be covered alongside reporting on those specific proceedings.

*Draft elements paper* – This innovations was broadly welcomed. The Chair noted that similar texts had been circulated at earlier MSPs, the difference this year was one of timing with this text circulated earlier than had been done previously.

*Confidence-Building Measures* – Turkey noted that it had made its CBM return public and urged others to do so as well. Algeria noted it had submitted a CBM return for the first time in 2014.

*Russian proposal* – Russia focused on its proposal made during the MX that negotiations towards a legally-binding instrument for the BWC should be re-launched. It noted that the BWC had shortcomings, giving as an example the creation of the ISU as a ‘modest result’ of efforts to strengthen the BWC compared with the institutions associated

with other WMD treaties. Russia named 40 State Party respondents to its questionnaire circulated earlier in the year and noted the majority of respondents wanted BWC shortcomings to be addressed. A number of statements made reference to perceived benefits to the BWC of a legally-binding instrument without direct reference to the Russian proposal. The US statement, while not mentioning the Russian proposal directly, described any new negotiations ‘as a formula for years of inaction’ and suggested more could be done developing existing measures. Others were more specific about the Russian proposal; for example, Australia noted that it could serve as a ‘positive catalyst’ to encourage fresh thinking about how to strengthen the Convention, but stated a preference for ‘a more practical approach’.

*Ebola* – The situation in west Africa was mentioned a number of times.

Canada/JACKSONZ noted that, for the first time, the UN Security Council had adopted a resolution on health security issues. Ghana noted there was no high containment reference lab in west Africa which may have hindered local efforts to combat the disease.

*Eighth Review Conference* – It was suggested that to make good use of work done in the inter-sessional meetings, discussions are needed in order to explore improved ways to incorporate the inter-sessional work in the work of the Review Conference.

*Inter-sessional working methods* – there were calls for a more structured inter-sessional process. A number of suggestions were made for new arrangements, such as the use of open ended working groups. The Netherlands suggested that two meetings each year were not enough, and stated it was working with Germany to bring forward proposals on new working methods.

*UN Secretary-General’s investigation mechanism* – This mechanism is the only formal process currently in place that could be used to investigate allegations of use of biological weapons. Some delegations see this as no substitute for a legally-binding verification arrangement. References were made to a training exercise for the mechanism in Germany in November and an exercise in France scheduled for June 2015.

*Other points* – Pakistan described the agreements from the Seventh Review Conference as embodying a ‘delicate balance’ that should be preserved; language also used by Iran in its national statement. Russia noted that Portugal had withdrawn its outstanding reservation to the 1925 Geneva Protocol [this would appear to have been in a note to France (the depositary government) in April 2014]. South Africa welcomed the increased participation in the inter-sessional meetings by African countries. A number of bilateral partnerships in projects or programmes were referred to, for example: Australia & Malaysia, Denmark & Kenya, and Germany & Morocco.

### **Side event**

Following the precedent set last year, some side events have been convened on themes rather than by single organizations. To this end, a lunchtime side event was convened on the theme of ‘Building a Web of Prevention: Progress to Date’. Presentations were given by: Iaroslava Maksymovych, (Palladin Institute of Biochemistry, Ukraine), on ‘Education and Awareness-Raising in Ukraine’; Jo Husbands, (Temporary Working Group on Outreach and Education of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons), on the recent report of that group; Brett Edwards, (University of Bath, UK) on ‘Biological and Chemical Security in an Age of Responsible Innovation: report of a meeting’; and Kathryn McLaughlin, (BioWeapons Prevention Project), launching the ‘2014 BioWeapons Monitor’. The event was chaired by Ambassador Serhiy Komisarenko of Ukraine. A second lunchtime event was convened by King’s College, London on ‘The Threat of Manufactured Disease’. Presentations were given by: Gustav Lindstrom (Geneva Centre for Security Policy), Simon Wain-Hobson (Institut Pasteur), and Marc Lipsitch (Harvard School of Public Health). The event was chaired by Filippa Lentzos (KCL) and introductory remarks were given by Ambassador Matthew Rowland of the United Kingdom.

*This is the second report from the Meeting of States Parties for the Biological Weapons Convention being held from 1 to 5 December 2014 in Geneva. The reports are prepared by Richard Guthrie for the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP). His e-mail is <richard@cbw-events.org.uk>.*