

Friday 5th December 2008

The Fourth Day: Reports presented and a Final Report to be decided

The 2008 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) for the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) continued on Thursday morning with the agenda items 'Reports from the Chairman and States Parties on universalization activities' and 'Report of the Implementation Support Unit (including report on participation in the confidence-building measures)'. The meeting went on to consider of the draft final report of the Meeting itself. The entire proceedings for the day were held in closed session.

Report on Universalization

The 2006 BWC Review Conference decided that the Chairman of each of the annual set of meetings of the renewed inter-sessional process should provide a report each year on universalization activities. The Chairman, Ambassador Georgi Avramchev (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), introduced his report on universalization activities at the start of the morning's proceedings. This report not only outlines specific activities to promote universalization either by the Chairman or the ISU, but also includes information from States Parties and other organizations, where that information has been provided to the Chairman or the ISU. Much of the information provided was from the BWPP. The Report (document number BWC/MSP/2008/4, dated 28 November 2008) is available via the UN Documents server <<http://documents.un.org>>.

Report of the ISU and discussion of CBMs

The report of the ISU (document BWC/MSP/2008/3, dated 28 November 2008) contains information on the activities of the ISU over the past year and also contains a table of details of which countries have submitted Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) in this time. The report includes details of 60 CBM submissions. An additional CBM return has since been received.

The discussion of the report offers a chance for delegates to take a wider perspective on the implementation of the BWC as it impossible to look at the ISU in isolation. The ISU reports to States Parties each year to illustrate how it has carried out the its mandated tasks. Paragraph 5 of part III of the Final Document of the 2006 Review Conference reads 'Taking into account the importance of providing administrative support to meetings agreed by the Review Conference as well as comprehensive implementation and universalization of the Convention and the exchange of confidence-building measures, the Conference decides that an "Implementation Support Unit" (ISU) shall be established ...'. By 'Taking into account' such considerations in outlining the specific tasks of the ISU, it follows that the activities of the ISU have to measured against this context, therefore 'comprehensive implementation' needs to be discussed during the review of the ISU report.

An example of taking a broader perspective on the role of the ISU was a statement by the Netherlands, which took the opportunity to remind the Meeting of the

working paper it introduced in 2007 on behalf of the EU on the ISU (see last year's MSP daily reports no 2 and no 6), with particular attention drawn to comments by other States Parties on related issues – such as the suggestion by Russia earlier this week on scientific advice. Russia responded to this, noting that its preference was for a panel of scientific expertise from nationally-appointed experts rather than from a forum where the experts might be chosen by other means, such as by the ISU, for example.

A number of States Parties urged further discussion on the role of CBMs and their content. Switzerland is particularly active in this regard. The Dutch referred to the 'intersessional straitjacket' that limited discussion on this topic before the 2011 Review Conference.

Draft Final Report

Following the circulation of suggested paragraphs for the final report on the procedure of the MSP on Wednesday, two sets of suggested paragraphs describing the substantive discussions of the meeting were circulated by the Chairman on Thursday.

An initial draft of the substantive paragraphs was distributed to States Parties in the afternoon session of the Meeting. A number of informal consultations were then carried out, primarily through the formal regional grouping associated with the BWC – western, eastern and non-aligned – but also through other gatherings such as the EU and the JACKSNNZ (an informal grouping of Japan, Australia, Canada, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Norway and New Zealand), for example.

A second draft of the substantive paragraphs was circulated at 6pm. While there are a number of changes between the two drafts, they are mostly to do with sequence or emphasis of issues. The drafts carry a lot more detail of discussions and concepts raised than past final reports. Further consultations were expected to be carried out on the draft.

Side Events

There were three side events on Thursday, two of which were held in parallel. Early in the morning, before the MSP started, Barry Kellman (DePaul University) gave a presentation on 'Preventing Bioviolence'. At the same time, the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC) gave its presentation on 'National Implementation Measures for the BWC' in Spanish that had been given in English on Monday.

A lunchtime seminar was held by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in association with the delegation of France on the subject of 'Universalization of Confidence-Building Measures in the Biological Weapons'. Opening remarks were heard from Christine Agboton Johnson (UNIDIR) and Sophie Moal-Makame (France). Presentations were given by Ngoc Phuong Huynh (ISU) on 'Successes and Challenges in Current CBMs', Filippa Lentzos (BIOS Centre, London School of Economics) on 'Global Trends in the Content of Information Exchanged', Angela Woodward (VERTIC) on 'Reaching a Tipping Point: Achieving the Universalization of the CBMs in the BWC'. Elisande Nexon (Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique) acted as a discussant.

PLEASE NOTE:

There will be an additional MSP report covering the final day of the Meeting. This will be published early next week and will be posted at the web location given below.

This is the fifth report from the Meeting of States Parties for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention which is being held from 1 to 5 December 2008 in Geneva. The reports are designed to help people who are not in Geneva to follow the proceedings.

The reports are prepared by Richard Guthrie on behalf of the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP) in co-operation with the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC). Copies are available via <<http://www.bwpp.org/2008MSP/MSP2008Resources.html>>.

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