
**Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention
on the Prohibition of the Development,
Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological
(Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their
Destruction**

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Geneva, 6–10 December 2010

Meeting of Experts

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of the 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.**

**European Union cooperative Initiatives to improve Biosafety
and Biosecurity**

Submitted by Belgium on behalf of the European Union

**I. European Union Strategy against the Proliferation of
Weapons of Mass Destruction**

1. The European Union (EU) Strategy against the proliferation of WMD, which was adopted by the European Council (EU Heads of State and Government) on 12 December 2003, derives from the European Security Strategy and provides overall guidance on the approaches, policy tools and specific actions to be taken to counter the WMD threat.
2. Embedded in the logic of prevention and support to the multilateral treaty system, the EU Strategy pursues non-proliferation objectives through:
 - (a) Promotion of universalisation and strict implementation of and compliance with existing non-proliferation treaties, instruments and obligations;
 - (b) Cooperation with partners and assistance;
 - (c) Support to regional stability and regional activities to prevent and combat proliferation.

3. While the EU's assistance and cooperation projects address a wide range of WMD proliferation risks and threats¹, the priorities related to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), including bio-security and bio-safety aspects, are defined in the Common Position 2006/242/CFSP relating to the 2006 Review Conference of the BTWC².

II. New lines of action

4. In view of further enhancing the implementation of the EU WMD strategy, the EU Council adopted, in December 2008, a plan called "New lines for Action by the European Union in combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems". This ambitious action plan, to be implemented by the end of 2010, contains a number of concrete measures to enhance effective implementation of the WMD strategy/including measures to reinforce security culture in the chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) area. Intensifying cooperation with third countries and increasing support for multilateral treaties, including the BTWC, and international organisations will remain high on the EU agenda.

III. Joint Action in support of the BTWC

5. The EU is committing considerable financial resources to support the BTWC. In 2006, the EU Council adopted its first Joint Action in support of the BTWC which ran from 2006 to 2008. In the course of the implementation of the Joint Action, the EU carried out regional outreach to almost all States which are not yet parties to the BTWC. It organised five regional seminars to promote the universality of the BTWC. The EU provided assistance to Peru and Nigeria where EU experts were actively involved in the drafting of national legislation implementing the BTWC. Following the implementation of this Joint Action, seven more States have acceded to the Convention.

6. Based on the positive experience of the first Joint Action, the second Joint Action was adopted on 10 November 2008. It encourages local and regional ownership of the projects and the building of a partnership between the EU and the recipient countries. The Joint Action focuses on activities that should bring concrete results in the view of the 2011 BTWC Review Process. The Implementing Agency of the Joint Action is the Implementing Support Unit of the BTWC, in close cooperation with the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Two persons are recruited for a limited period of time and financed by the EU, helping the ISU to implement this EU initiative.

7. The four areas of support, for which the EU will spend EUR 1 400 000 are:

(a) **Universalisation:** This project provides for outreach in States not Parties to the Convention. Under the Joint Action, regional workshops are organised which explain the benefits and consequences of acceding to the Convention and contribute to understanding the assistance needs of the States in the region. Legal assistance related to the ratification or the accession to the Convention can be provided. Means to raise awareness among stakeholders, in particular the authorities responsible for the ratification and implementation of the Convention are also available. Financial grants for training and awareness-raising visits of national stakeholders to the

¹ The Council of the EU adopted for example Joint Actions in support of the IAEA, OPCW, CTBTO activities, as well as Joint Actions in support of multilateral instruments such as UN SCR 1540 and BTWC.

² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:088:0065:0067:EN:PDF>

authorities of EU Member States in charge of the implementation of the Convention can also be provided.

(b) National implementation: The goal is to ensure that States implement their obligations under the Convention by means of national legislation and administrative measures and enforce them effectively, to prevent violations of the BTWC. Legal advice will be provided to a maximum of seven interested States Parties. Assistance can take the form of legal advice. It can be related to the drafting of appropriate legislative or administrative measures, including criminal law provisions. Assistance can also include workshops relating to the national implementation of the BTWC and enforcement, and would target decision making authorities and governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. A first workshop is planned in Nigeria in autumn 2010. An implementation guide will be produced. Factsheets and guidelines, which might be useful, can be found on VERTIC's website <http://www.vertic.org/NIM/tools/factsheets/#fs7>

(c) Promotion of Regular Submission of Confidence Building Measures (CBM): The purpose is to promote and increase the submission of CBM declarations on a regular basis. A guide has been drafted to help States Parties in submitting CBMs, it was launched in December 2009. The CBM guide can be found at [http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/\(httpAssets\)/F925FAB12B61A83DC12576860035E2D6/\\$file/CBM+guide+pre-production+final+2+Dec.pdf](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/F925FAB12B61A83DC12576860035E2D6/$file/CBM+guide+pre-production+final+2+Dec.pdf) The EU carried out demarches to all states parties that have never or not since 2006 submitted CBM declarations. The Joint Action also includes a contribution to the UNODA to facilitate the improvement and the maintenance of the existing secure CBM website and to improve the technical aspects of the electronic submission of existing CBM declarations. Assistance visits took place to the Philippines and to the FYROM to help them to submit their first CBM declaration. Two CBM workshops will be organized in 2010 in the margins of the experts meeting and the States Parties meeting to exchange experiences about the CBM process and to facilitate (first time) submission of CBMs. All states parties will be invited to participate.

(d) Support to the BTWC intersessional process: The second Joint Action supports discussions on inter-sessional topics. Two workshops have taken place so far: In November 2009, a number of States Parties, including EU Member States, EU institutions, and international organizations participated in a workshop in Brussels on last year's inter-sessional topic (International Workshop on Improving Cooperation under Article X for Disease Surveillance, Detection, Diagnosis and Containment). In June 2010, a second workshop on the 2010 inter-sessional topic took place in Madrid: International Workshop on Responding to the Alleged Use of Biological Weapons. The results of the workshops have been made available to BTWC States Parties as working papers: BWC/MSP/2009/WP.1 (Brussels) and BWC/MSP/2010/MX/WP.4 (Madrid).

8. States Parties interested in assistance opportunities on CBMs or national implementation are invited to contact the Implementation Support Unit, or the Office of the EU Representative on Non-proliferation and Disarmament (EU Council Secretariat).

IV. Joint Action in support of WHO activities in the area of laboratory bio-safety and bio-security

9. To implement the EU WMD Strategy in the field of biological weapons and to give life to decisions of the BTWC States Parties at the 2006 Review Conference, the European Union developed practical cooperative projects. In particular, on 14 April 2008 the Council

of the European Union adopted Joint Action 2008/307/CFSP in support of WHO activities in the area of laboratory bio-safety and bio-security³.

10. The projects under this Joint Action pursue two main objectives:
 - (a) Promoting bio-risk reduction practices and awareness, including bio-safety, bio-security, bio-ethics and preparedness against intentional misuse of biological agents and toxins, through international cooperation and networking in this area,
 - (b) Ensuring the safety and security of microbial or other biological agents or toxins in laboratories and other facilities, including during transportation, in order to prevent unauthorised access to and removal of such agents and toxins.
11. The project "Promotion of bio-risk reduction management through regional and national outreach" creates a framework for three different approaches to enhance bio-risk management practices around the world:
 - (a) Five regional workshops to raise awareness about the risks associated with the misuse or accidental exposure to or release of dangerous biological agents and toxins and bio-risk management practices with the aim of initiating concrete country-focused operational initiatives in the field of bio-safety and bio-security;
 - (b) At least four country visits focus on consultations with relevant national competent authorities sharing experience on different aspects of existing bio-risk management practices and raising commitment to bio-risk reduction management in the health sector;
 - (c) Three regional topic-specific workshops with health policy makers as well as laboratory managers and staff shall help to deepen the understanding of the elements of bio-risk reduction practices (e.g. legislation, biosafety and biosecurity measures, safe and secure transportation, etc.) with the view how to plan for sustainability of programmes through networks, seminars and professional societies.
12. The project "Strengthening the security and laboratory management practices against biological risks" is designed to assist an interested country to enhance overall national bio-preparedness plans and to further develop bio-risk management practices in laboratories and other facilities and during transport. The envisaged activities include overall evaluation and review of relevant authorities and national public health response capabilities and plans, extensive training tailored to the needs of laboratory staff at national and regional level, exercises to test the operation of public health response system, etc.
13. While the EU pre-defined priority regions with which it wishes to engage in cooperation through this Joint Action, a strong focus on regional and local ownership of concrete projects remains one of the main features of EU's initiative. Therefore, the EU actively seeks the involvement and the partnership of BTWC States Parties in this initiative.
14. To achieve sustainability of proposed activities, the EU will promote:
 - (a) Networking among all national stakeholders, including the public health sector, justice, police, foreign affairs, and other relevant sectors;
 - (b) The involvement of relevant international and regional organisations;
 - (c) The membership of countries' stakeholders in regional professional bio-security and bio-safety associations;

³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:106:0017:0023:EN:PDF>

- (d) Networking, especially in the regional context, among reference laboratories to promote transparency and to build confidence.

15. Implementation of the Joint Action has started. In 2009, Oman was selected as recipient country for the in-country project "Strengthening the security and laboratory management practices against biological risks". The project manager working on the implementation of the project in Oman has been deployed. He is part of the local WHO office and is working closely with the Omani authorities. The first regional workshop for the Middle Eastern region on bio-risk management, back-to-back with a specific workshop on shipping of infectious substances, took place from 2-6 May 2010 in Oman. A workshop was organized from 23 to 25 June 2009 by the WHO for countries from South East Asia and the West Pacific in Bali, Indonesia. The main objective of the workshop was to promote strengthening of health laboratories with a special focus on improving quality.

V. Addressing biosafety and biosecurity within EU efforts in the field of CBRN risk mitigation

16. In addition to natural outbreaks, the increasing number of high-level containment laboratories and evolving technologies in the life sciences pose risks and threats, including heightened availability of dangerous pathogens or toxins for bioterrorists or other actors, with severe economic and social impacts. Today, many of the laboratories handling infectious agents are insufficiently protected and the associated security risks may not be fully realized, therefore further actions are being taken by the EU to address and prevent this new type of risks.

17. In this context, the EU uses its different development and cooperation instruments to contribute to enhance bio-safety and bio-security in third countries. In particular, the Instrument for Stability (long-term component) is an adequate instrument allowing for a systematic effort to respond to the threats outlined in the European Security Strategy through innovative capacity building measures on a global scale, in response to locally identified needs.

18. The EU assistance projects in third countries in the field of bio-safety and bio-security cover a large number of areas and activities, such as legislative and regulatory assistance, training, safety and security for the handling, storage and transportation of dangerous biological agents, promoting a culture of bio-safety and biosecurity (etc...) and include the followings:

(a) The EU supported a project from 2008 to strengthen bio-safety and bio-security capabilities in Russia and in Central Asian countries through training of personnel to improve safety/security practices of key biological facilities (Instrument for Stability, €6.8 million). The overall objectives of the project are to improve the bio-safety and bio-security by raising the scientific and technical skills of the personnel working at or supervising relevant laboratories in the countries, by providing training and additional equipment and improving the animal disease monitoring systems and diagnostics capabilities for infectious diseases.

(b) The EU supported the 'EpiSouth' project in 2009 to build-up a network for the control of health, security threats and other bio-security risks in countries of the Mediterranean basin (Instrument, for Stability, €3 million). The overall objective of this project is, through a complementary approach with existing efforts within the EU's territory, to increase the health security in the Mediterranean Area and South-East Europe by enhancing and strengthening the preparedness to common health threats and bio-security risks at national and regional levels.

(c) The EU also launched a project in Afghanistan in 2009 to provide technical assistance to design and build a new 1,100sqm Central Veterinary Diagnostic & Research Laboratory (CVDRL) in Kabul and to offer training to a team of twelve laboratory technicians on a wide range of diagnostic tests, largely focusing on parasitology, microbiology, serology and hematology (Development Cooperation Instrument).

19. The EU is also considering further actions in the field of bio-safety and bio-security:

(a) The EU is planning to improve bio-safety and bio-security at the Ukrainian anti-plague station (UAPS) of Simferopol through various measures:

- (i) Strengthening physical protection of the pathogens stored in the existing facility, including the prevention of illicit access to pathogens by terrorists and other criminals;
- (ii) Providing a well-equipped facility in line with national Ukrainian standards, international standards and recommendations in the framework of long-lasting international cooperation program between the EU and Ukraine;
- (iii) Providing training of the relevant personnel of the UAPS in order to ensure a safe and secure handling of highly dangerous and infectious pathogens.

(b) The EU is also planning to strengthen bio-safety and bio-security capabilities of relevant organizations/agencies in South Caucasus and Central Asian countries (Instrument for Stability, € million). More specifically, the support is to be provided with a view to:

- (i) Upgrading the bio-safety/security related infrastructure of selected laboratories;
- (ii) Providing training to the personnel of the countries' bio-laboratories;
- (iii) Funding R&D projects addressing the countries' bio-safety/security needs.

(c) The EU is also considering supporting an initiative to build up mobile laboratories in Africa in order to respond to the risks posed by global threats in the bio field (Instrument for Stability, € million). The project would consider the elaboration of two units of mobile labs, managed by European Union experts. These tools could be used in theatre, as appropriate, when outbreaks of international relevance occur, or when they involve unknown pathogens, or when local health services do not have the expertise and facilities to confirm and manage the epidemic.

20. In addition to these "stand-alone" projects in the field of bio-safety and bio-security, the EU is currently supporting an initiative to establish regional CBRN Centres of Excellence in a number of regions (South East Asia, Middle East, Mediterranean basin, etc.). The approach proposed by the European Union is to mobilize national, regional and international resources to achieve the common objective to develop a coherent CBRN policy at national and regional level. The main objective is to build national and regional capacities to optimize the sharing and use of CBRN expertise through a regional network that could collect, analyze, identify and deploy resources to respond to the identified needs. It would cover all aspects of CBRN policy, such as export control, border monitoring, bio-safety and security, illicit financing, engagement of the scientific community. The regional Centres of Excellence, through national point of contacts, would identify needs in the different domains and the European Union would consider how to respond to them. It should therefore contribute to reinforcing local capacities in the field of CBRN as well as increase local ownership, sustainability and accountability in the partner countries. Depending on the needs identified, support in the field of bio-safety and bio-security, bio risk management, lab training is likely to become an essential aspect of this initiative.

VI. Health security

21. The European Commission is full member of the Global Health Security Initiative (GHSI) which is an informal, international partnership among like-minded countries to strengthen health preparedness and response globally to threats of biological, chemical, radio-nuclear terrorism (CBRN) and pandemic influenza. GHSI members are the G7 countries, Mexico and the European Commission. WHO participates as an observer.

22. At the beginning, the focus of the GHSI was on preparedness for bioterrorist events. The scope of the initiative was extended over the years to pandemic preparedness including dealing with crisis communication. In the pandemic (H1N1) of 2009, the added value of the initiative was demonstrated, especially with regards to early exchange on appropriate measures not only across Europe but also globally. In this regard, the European Commission will host a table top exercise in autumn 2010 to test communication between the GHSI partners in an emergency situation.

VII. Emergency assistance

23. Countries facing a biological incident that overwhelms or threatens to overwhelm their national response capability may at any time issue an official request aiming at the activation of the Community Mechanism for Civil Protection. This mechanism pools and channels immediate civil protection and medical assistance available in and offered by Member States of the European Union. Vaccines, countermeasures and related medical assistance can be part of the overall ad hoc emergency assistance channeled through the Civil Protection Mechanism.

VIII. Contact points for further information

A. WMD Strategy and Joint Actions in support of BTWC and bio-safety and bio-security

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