

Second Meeting
Geneva, 6-10 December 2004

Meeting of Experts
Geneva, 19-30 July 2004
Items 5 and 6 of the agenda

Challenges of the Second Year of the Follow-up Process

Submitted by Hungary

1. The Fifth Review Conference created through the follow-up process an opportunity for a fresh start for the BWC regime. The existence of the new process in itself is a major achievement. Such an achievement should be assessed against the earlier critical challenges to the prohibition regime:
 - (i) major disagreement between States Parties which surfaced in summer-autumn 2001 on the usefulness of multilaterally codified, legally binding implementation norms;
 - (ii) the autumn 2001 anthrax attacks coupled with the impact of 9/11 significantly changed threat perceptions and damaged the deliberate disease taboo;
 - (iii) Fifth Review Conference – close to collapse, had to be suspended;
 - (iv) during the most critical stage: December 2001 – September 2002 there was a danger of a complete shut-down of the multilateral prohibition regime until 2006.

2. The overall expectation is to build on the firm basis of the follow-up process achieved so far. Therefore the:
 - (i) deliberations should be focused, substantial, relevant vis-à-vis the challenges;
 - (ii) participation again expected to be higher than technical level, more representative than at review conferences;
 - (iii) an increased awareness of the norm against BW should be promoted;
 - (iv) links between States Parties and between relevant IGOs and States Parties should be created again this year.

3. The 2004 topics are extremely topical, since the adoption of our mandate the world has experienced two alarming infectious disease events, the emergence and subsequent spread of SARS

and the Avian influenza. What is more dramatic the looming threat of an influenza pandemic comparable to the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic. As it is emphasized in the assessment of WHO the possibility of recognizing conditions conducive to a pandemic brings with it the opportunity to take appropriate corrective actions and thus prevent the great loss of life and social disruption invariably caused by pandemics. To do so, surveillance and reporting need to be strengthened, as does collaboration between the public health and agricultural sectors. These events underscore the need for international solidarity against threats that can spread readily and widely – with highly adverse consequences for economies and societies as well as public health – in a closely interconnected and highly mobile world. The control of such threats depends on prompt and transparent reporting of cases and a robust system of global surveillance and response. Such a system will also strengthen protection against a third infectious threat that became prominent in the autumn of 2001, namely, the risk that biological agents would deliberately be used to cause harm.

4. This meeting should and will contribute to the further steps needed in the new BWC process:
 - (i) to consolidate and further develop the achievements of the new BWC process;
 - (ii) assist in further national implementation efforts;
 - (iii) raise awareness about on-going activities outside the BWC framework and further needs;
 - (iv) promote implementation related assistance between interested countries;
 - (v) prepare the ground on carrying forward the process towards of further strengthening the BWC regime.
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