The BWC Intersessional Process – Current Issues

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1972 Biological Weapons Convention

- 170 states parties
- Prohibition of development, possession and proliferation of biological agents for weapons purposes
- Obligation to cooperate in the peaceful use of biology and biotechnology (Article X)
- No verification system; Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs)
- Implementation Support Unit (ISU)
- Review conferences every 5 years
The 2011 BWC Review Conference: Results

- Final Declaration with review of all BWC articles
- “Decisions and Recommendations“
  - Extension of ISU until 2016, no additional staff or resources
  - Revisions of CBMs
  - Cooperation and assistance measures (sponsorship programme, database)
  - New intersessional process 2012-2015
Current Challenges

- Rapid developments in biology, biotechnology, life sciences
- Research with high dual-use potential
- Risk of misuse and misperceptions

- Absence of important topics from agenda (compliance!)
- Fundamentally different interpretations of BWC and key concepts
  - Security vs. development aspects
  - Role of BWC relative to anti-terrorism and global health instruments
Intersessional Process 2012-2015

- Annual meetings of experts and states parties
- 3 standing agenda items, to be covered annually
- 2 additional topics, to be covered in two consecutive years each
  - Enhancing CBM participation in 2012-2013
  - Assistance in case of BW attack in 2014-2015

- No mandate for decision-making
- Negotiation of new measures not before 2016 Review Conference
Standing Agenda Items 2012-2015 (1)

Cooperation and Assistance, with special emphasis on Article X
- Covers technology cooperation as well as assistance activities; scope disputed, highly politicised
- Needed: more pragmatic discussions and better use of database; more active engagement

Review of Science and Technology (S&T) Developments
- First formal consideration of relevant S&T developments
- Currently mere collection of information, outcome unclear
- Needed: more structured and effective S&T review (documentation for MSP, task groups after 2016)
Standing Agenda Items 2012-2015 (2)

National implementation

- Required: national legislation and regulations, including export controls, biosafety and biosecurity measures
  - Discussions about common standards

- Emerging connection of national implementation with compliance:
  Implementation assessment, peer review
  - “We need to talk about compliance!” (BWC/MSP/2012/WP.11)
Options for the EU

- Ensure EU members' full implementation of all obligations
- Continue supportive activities (BWC Action)
- Increase pragmatic contributions to BWC meetings and cross-group cooperation
- Enhance EU's visibility and participation opportunities
- Start preparing for 2016 Review Conference
  - Working Papers (joint or individual)
  - Informal meetings/workshops etc.
  - Language for MSP Reports
Thank you for your attention.

Questions? Comments?

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EU BWC Action 2012-2015

Regional workshops
- Awareness-raising

Extended implementation assistance
- Universalisation
- CBM assistance
- Implementation measures
- Awareness-raising
- Codes of Conduct & biosafety/biosecurity standards
EU BWC Action 2012-2015

Enabling tools

- National implementation guide
- CBM guide
- Electronic tool for CBM submission
- Sponsorship for participation in BWC meetings
- Trainings for experts of the UNSG investigation mechanism