



Biochemical Security 2030 Project, University of Bath

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Statement by the Biochemical Security 2030 Project, University of Bath

To the 2014 Meeting of Experts

To the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapon Convention

Mr Chairman and Distinguished Representatives.

It is a great honour to have the opportunity to contribute to this meeting. I am speaking today on behalf of the Biochemical Security 2030 project based at the University of Bath. This project is led by Professor David Galbreath, and is based on a grant proposal written by Dr Alexander Kelle, both from the University of Bath. This UK based initiative has been supported by funding from the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory as well as the Economic and Social Research Council.

We greatly welcome the participation of the Calgary iGem team at this meeting, we also commend the work of those who have fostered awareness of safety and security issues among the next generation of scientists.

Indeed, within our work in the South-West of the UK, the value of issue ownership within the scientific community in relation to misuse concerns has been made very apparent. Further to this, we have found that a wide range of institutions already play a fundamental role in the identification of potential risks associated with university based research; as well as in the development and sharing of best practice. This includes those with responsibility for laboratory safety, university security as well as local level ethics review.

However, we have also found, that while safety is often understood as a fundamental aspect of security in some policy contexts, that safety infrastructures are not always thought of in terms of security at a local level. Added to this it is also not always clear who has responsibility at local level for the development of institutional ethics policy on dual-use issues.

This then highlights the importance of attempts to identify stakeholders, increase awareness and foster issue ownership in order to ensure that the materials, knowledge and technologies which underpin scientific advances are not utilized for hostile purposes. Universities can be a good focal point of such action as they engage with research, train future researchers and are also consumers of cutting-edge technology services- lending them potential weight as responsible consumers.

We feel that further engagement with universities, professional biological and chemical safety bodies, university ethics bodies, research funders as well as industry associations could help develop further initiatives in this area. We would also like to reiterate that even where regulation is not

deemed necessary or practical, that governments and regulators can still play a facilitative role in supporting the development of good practice in both academic and industry contexts.

Mr Chairman

Our project has been lucky enough to receive input from a number of experts, who have written a series of policy documents on the responsiveness of local, national and international security regimes to advances in science and technology. These papers will be made available at this meeting. Digital versions of these, as well as other papers are also available at biochemsec2030.org. In particular, I would like to draw attention to three of our recently published papers.

Policy paper 5 is entitled '*To What Extent Was The Review Of Science And Technology Made More Effective And Efficient At The 2013 Meeting Of BTWC States Parties?*' and is written By Professor Malcolm Dando.

This paper examines the action-orientated ideas for dealing with advances in relevant science and technology put forward by some State Parties as part of the Seventh Review conference. It is in this context, that the paper outlines the extent to which treatment of science and technology as a Standing Agenda Item proved unsatisfactory within the first (2012) Inter-Sessional Process as well as the 2013 Meeting of Experts.

The paper goes on to show that some State Parties continued to demonstrate, for example in regard to dual-use education for life scientists, how good progress could be made. Other State Parties, however, clearly did not see the review of science and technology as requiring urgent action. It is argued that as a result, agreements made at the 2013 Meeting of States Parties lacked the specificity and action-orientation that would have been produced by a more effective and efficient mechanism.

It is suggested that this inadequacy, on present evidence, is unlikely to change before the Eighth Review Conference in 2016, but the paper ends by noting that efforts to make progress in the lead up to the Eight Review Conference continue as part of preparations for the 2014 Meeting of States Parties in Geneva.

Policy paper 6 is entitled '*Convergence at the Intersection of Chemistry and Biology- Implications for the Regime Prohibiting Chemical and Biological Weapons*' and is written By Dr Ralf Trapp.

The paper, while not calling for the fusion of the chemical and biological weapon regimes, argues in favour of better process coordination between the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions along similar lines as approaches already adopted within environmental law and as part of humanitarian responses to natural events. It presents five specific recommendations:

The establishment of an informal group of experts to monitor and review how developments in science and technology change patterns of production and trade.

The organisation of a series of expert meetings, or a project group, to review technical options for international verification and alternative compliance management measures in the area of overlap between the Chemical and Biological Weapon Conventions.

The organisation of new forums to discuss the state of the art in risk identification, assessment and management with regard to developments at the intersection between chemistry and biology which are of relevant to the Chemical and Biological Weapon Conventions.

The continuation of informal information exchanges and contacts between the ISU and the OPCW, including through the SAB.

The development of coordination procedures and, where possible, joint projects involving the OPCW, the ISU and other relevant international agencies to deal with implementation issues related to activities at the overlap between the two treaties.

Finally, we wish to draw your attention to policy paper 7, entitled '*BTWC: Learning From Alternative Models Of Science And Technology Review*'.

Key recommendations from this paper include:

Inviting organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation, World Organisation for Animal Health, and World Health Organisation to present their views on best practice in science advisory processes to meetings of States Parties.

The paper also outlines a series of other practical considerations relevant to the design of Science and technology review processes in the context of the Biological Weapon Convention.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

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