

Biological and chemical weapons

The second week of general debate saw Angola, Brunei Darussalam, Côte d'Ivoire, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan, and the International Committee of the Red Cross continuing to stress the importance of universalisation of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) while Algeria, China, Guinea, Palestine, and Serbia emphasized the need for the full implementation of its provisions. Nepal gave the welcome news that it is in the process of ratifying the BWC, while Iran called upon Israel to accede to both the BWC as well as to its chemical weapons counterpart – the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Myanmar highlighted its recent accessions to the BWC and the CWC in 2014 and 2015, respectively.

Algeria, Canada, Estonia, San Marino, Serbia, Turkey, the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the Global Civil Society Coalition for the Biological Weapons Convention (GCSC) addressed preparations and hopes for the forthcoming Eighth Review Conference of the BWC in November 2016. Algeria emphasized the need for 'enhanced cooperation' on Article X issues relating to the transfer of biological technologies for peaceful purposes and underscored the need to establish a verification mechanism. Canada highlighted its work with China and the BWC Implementation Support Unit to 'advance key issues in the lead-up to the Review Conference', citing as priorities the need to improve the science and technology review process, promote effective national implementation of the Convention and explore voluntary transparency activities that share best practices on implementation and improve confidence in compliance with the Convention. Turkey noted the need for a stronger intersessional work programme between Review Conferences, while China drew attention to its recommendation of a Code of Conduct for Biological Scientists as well as the establishment of a Non-Proliferation Export Control and International Cooperation Regime.

The UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs highlighted the urgent need to better prevent and responding to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons use, particularly in the context of non-state actors. In his address, Mr Kim Won-soo emphasized the importance of the BWC Eighth Review Conference as an opportunity to strengthen cooperative response and preparedness mechanisms under Article VII in the absence of an in-house institutional capacity and spoke to the need to strengthen the operational capacity and readiness of the Secretary-General's Mechanism to investigate allegations of the use of chemical, biological and toxin weapons (SGM). Mr Kim Won-soo referenced the need for an improved science and technology review mechanism in addition to 'reinforcing the Implementation Support Unit with technical expertise'. The High Representative also remarked that international biosecurity efforts lags behind chemical and nuclear security measures.

The GCSC, marking the first time a non-governmental organization had addressed the First Committee on the issue of biological weapons, noted with alarm that the norm against the development and use of biological weapons was under threat and that the BWC is becoming increasingly 'unfit for purpose'. The GCSC called for States Parties to the Convention to work together towards achieving four priority areas at the Review Conference, namely a robust science and technology review process; an improved intersessional work programme with the ability to take decisions; a revitalized discussion on compliance options; and, an expanded and appropriately resourced Implementation Support Unit.

States speaking on the Chemical Weapons Convention, including Algeria, Brunei Darussalam, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Iran, Pakistan, Palestine, Senegal, Serbia, and Turkey, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), again highlighted the importance of universality of the Convention and full implementation of all of its provisions.

Canada, Brunei Darussalam, Estonia, Myanmar, San Marino, and Turkey, as well as the ICRC, the OPCW, and the UN High Representative of Disarmament Affairs, issued strong condemnations over the use of chemical weapons on Syrian territory by both the government of Syria and by non-state actors, with a number of States calling for accountability for perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks. In addition, Canada, Estonia, Myanmar, and Turkey noted the successful efforts towards chemical weapons stockpile destruction in Libya and Syria. Turkey, however, voiced its dismay at the continuing discrepancies in Syria's chemical weapons programme declarations. Estonia expressed its expectation for 'a strong resolution' of the First Committee on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention that will be discussed next week.

The OPCW spoke to the need for 'zero tolerance' on the use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals as weapons, noting its work in Syria under the UN-OPCW Joint Investigatory Mechanism as well as its technical assistance visits (TAV) to assist Iraqi authorities in the conduct of their investigations regarding alleged chemical weapons attacks by non-state actors in three locations in Iraq. The OPCW also highlighted the work of its Open Ended Working Group on Terrorism, cooperation under UN Security Council resolution 1540 (UNSC 1540) and with the UN Counterterrorism Implementation Taskforce. The OPCW reported that its Technical Secretariat established a rapid response and assistance mission in 2016 to be deployed at the request of a state party to provide assistance in the case of use of chemical weapons. In addition to its cooperation and assistance work, the OPCW pays particular attention to education and outreach activities recently establishing an Advisory Board on Outreach and Education. This initiative is especially welcome at a time when, as a Civil Society Youth Representative from PACE University lamented during the NGO segment of this week's debate, States have an 'anemic vision' of disarmament education, demonstrating little genuine interest in promoting disarmament education, providing little substance and even fewer resources.

The increasing threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) use by non-state actors was a pervasive theme in many interventions during the General Debate and, in this context, several States highlighted the importance of UN Security Council resolution 1540 in the global security architecture. The UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs cited the 'capacity gap in national implementation' and looked to the Comprehensive Review, due to be completed by December 2016, as an opportunity to consider the implications of emerging technology that can increase the risk of WMD use and proliferation. Malaysia drew attention to its high level Open Debate convened in August on addressing the proliferation of WMD to non-state actors and called for a 'regular review of scientific, technological and international commerce advancements that facilitates access to WMD acquisition'. Serbia noted its accession to the Group of Friends of CBRN Risk Mitigation and Security Governance, and stated that it is the process of finalizing its CBRN National Action Plan.

During statements by international organizations, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) described its efforts under the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) WMD Working Group entitled "Ensuring effective inter-agency interoperability and

coordinated communication in case of chemical and/or biological attacks.” The task force focuses on improving inter-agency coordination in terms of operational activities and communication with the public to ensure an effective response to a terrorist attack involving chemical and/or biological weapons.