

Russian side event: mobile biomedical units and Scientific Advisory Committee  
26 April 2016

Ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear colleagues,

Good afternoon and welcome to this side event to present and discuss two new Russian proposals for the Biological Weapons Convention - mobile biomedical units and the Scientific Advisory Committee.

My name is Vladimir Ladanov, I am Counsellor at the Arms Control Department of the Foreign Ministry where I deal with the BWC. Today with us are two colleagues from Russia's Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Wellbeing. Dr Yulia Demina is Deputy Head of Epidemiological Surveillance Department and Dr Vyacheslav Smolensky is Head of International Cooperation Department.

Last week, on 19 April, we reached out here in Geneva to all three BWC regional groups, the NAM, WEOG, and the Eastern European. We had a frank and constructive discussion, and we are very satisfied with the feedback received. We feel that States Parties are getting energised and a new hope to achieve improved implementation of the Convention is slowly emerging. Now, we have to make this hope a reality.

In that sense, let us proceed to specific proposals to strengthen the BWC's regime.

1. First, we are going to talk about Russia's proposal for mobile biomedical units as contained in working paper "Operationalising mobile biomedical units to deliver protection against biological weapons, investigate their alleged use, and to suppress epidemics of various etiology"; it is available on the website of the Preparatory Committee.

Since the BWC lacks an institutional basis for its implementation at the international level we have elaborated a concept for the operationalisation of the provisions of Article X (international co-operation for the prevention of disease), Article VII (assistance and protection against biological weapons), and Article VI (investigation of alleged use of biological weapons).

We are of the view that by dealing with these three tasks in combination useful synergies may be achieved to result in creating a lot of added value while utilising resources in an effective and efficient manner. To fulfill that, it is proposed to create under the BWC mobile biomedical units of field epidemiologists and microbiologists that upon request from affected states shall provide assistance in preventing and suppressing dangerous epidemics. Mobile units are to be established at the central level under the BWC and funded from assessed contributions by States Parties in accordance with the scale of assessments. They are to be accountable to and supervised by the policy organs established by States Parties.

The chief occupation of such units will be humanitarian, namely dealing with naturally occurring outbreaks of infectious diseases. However, If ever a situation should arise involving alleged use of biological agents as weapons, mobile biomedical units may be called upon to investigate with a view to ascertaining the facts of the matter, and to provide emergency medical assistance to the affected state.

Such mobile biomedical units concept is unique in the BWC context and it had not been previously explored. Therefore, given its promise and clear advantages our expectation

is that it may allow to find a so much needed solution to the perennial problem of the BWC's institutional deficit and put the future implementation of the Convention on a reliable footing.

In developing the concept of mobile biomedical units we have benefited greatly from a vast experience spanning many decades of operating similarly tasked Russian anti-epidemic teams. This ensures that the proposal is founded on a solid basis of practical and successful work that we propose to multilateralise for the benefit of the entire international community.

Now, without further ado, I give the floor to Yulia to talk about the capabilities of mobile biomedical units and give us some illustrative examples of their employment domestically and abroad. After that, the floor will be opened for questions and discussion.

Yulia will be speaking in Russian and simultaneous interpretation will be provided from Russian into English. Yulia, the floor is yours.

2. We have had a good discussion on mobile biomedical units and now let us move on to the Scientific Advisory Committee. It is proposed by us as an institutional subsidiary organ under the BWC to assess developments in areas of science and technology relevant to the Convention, and to offer specialized recommendations in that regard.

The Scientific Advisory Committee concept is not new as such in a sense that it utilizes and puts together several proven and time tested elements adapted from other successful international fora to suit the needs of the BWC community. In addition to ensuring professional credentials of the Scientific Advisory Committee, the proposal also safeguards inclusiveness by guaranteeing that regional perspectives on science and technology matters will be heard. Because, indeed, there are regional perspectives on science and technology issues.

The Committee will be reporting directly to a meeting of States Parties that will consider the report and its recommendations and decide on follow-up action, if any. We see that as the process owned, driven and fully controlled by States Parties for the benefit of States Parties.

The agreed number of the Committee's sessions will be paid for from the BWC budget based on assessed contributions. This will ensure a broad spectrum of regional participation thus guaranteeing the credibility of the Committee's work including its insights and recommendations.

Now we look forward to your questions and comment.