



SOFIMUN
Sofia International Model United Nations

Edition: 1/2008
Period: 20-27 July 2008
Location: Sofia, Bulgaria

Website: www.sofimun.org
Forum: www.forum.sofimun.org
Media space: www.press.sofimun.org
E-mail: info@sofimun.org

"Search Of Future Ideas, Models Us Now"

COMMITTEE:
CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CHAIRPERSON:
ANDREA BERGER & GEORGE NICOLOV

TOPIC: (A) – BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

BACKGROUND GUIDE

The Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament was established in 1979 to serve as the world's foremost arms control and disarmament negotiating forum. Since that time, the CD has negotiated the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Biological Weapons Convention, Chemical Weapons Convention and Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. Together the 65 member states of the CD confront international disarmament issues such as the prevention of an arms race in outer space, transparency in armaments, nuclear war prevention, and weapons of mass destruction.

The Conference on Disarmament conducts its work based on consensus, one of the factors largely attributed to its persistent deadlock. In order to negotiate a treaty, the CD needs prior consensus on a programme of work which will include the mandate of the ad hoc committee charged to draft the treaty. In real life, the treaty concluded by the aforementioned ad hoc committee would be re-submitted to the CD for final adoption and approval. In light of the considerably complicated working methods of the Conference, the SOFIMUN CD will extend its discussions to the point a mandate for an ad hoc committee, special coordinator, or technical working group is agreed upon.

The SOFIMUN Conference on Disarmament will seek to overcome the impasse of the committee in order to produce a "programme of work" (the committee's agenda). Intense debates on the two topics to be discussed, biological weapons and terrorism and disarmament, are a certainty!





SOFIMUN
Sofia International Model United Nations

Edition: 1/2008
Period: 20-27 July 2008
Location: Sofia, Bulgaria

Website: www.sofimun.org
Forum: www.forum.sofimun.org
Media space: www.press.sofimun.org
E-mail: info@sofimun.org

"Search Of Future Ideas, Models Us Now"

COMMITTEE:
CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CHAIRPERSON:
ANDREA BERGER & GEORGE NICOLOV

TOPIC: (A) – BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Topic A: Biological Weapons - summary



Biological weapons, essentially the use of any pathogen with intent to kill or cause harm to an individual or number thereof, have become of increasing concern in recent decades, especially following the disclosure by Iraq of its sizeable biological weapons programme during the 1991 Persian Gulf War. At present a number of states are still suspected of pursuing such programmes. Biological agents are able to be manufactured relatively easily as compared to other forms of weapons, although their effective delivery is of greater difficulty. The Biological Weapons Convention, while fully in force, has come under fire for lack of an effective verification mechanism and the absence of the ratification of key nations. In addition, non-state actors have intersected with the nexus of biological weapons, evident in 2001 use of anthrax spores in the contamination of letters to prominent US politicians. The SOFIIMUN CD will therefore evaluate not only ways to strengthen the

Biological Weapons Convention and associated non-proliferation mechanisms, but may also evaluate the possibility of ensuring its applicability to non-state actors.

Topic A: Biological Weapons – background guide

Biological weapons, as defined by the Biological Weapons Convention, include any type of agent derived from a living organism which is employed to inflict harm. Plant and animal pathogens may be used against agricultural targets, creating potential economic devastation. This type of weaponry is extremely dangerous as it is hard to be detected and small quantities of it may cause serious damage and destroy large cities or regions, causing high numbers of death and wide-scale panic. Biological weapons are not only easy to hide, but also difficult to protect against. What is particularly worrying is that only small quantities of agents, often available on the open market, are needed for the development of biological weapons by terrorist groups. Thus, the biological threat continues to grow.



Despite the non-proliferation efforts of the international community, the confirmed or suspected biological weapons programmes of a number of nations is cause for great concern. For example, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Syria, and Iraq are considered to either possess or to be actively involved in the development of biological agents. Iraq reportedly began its offensive biological weapons programme with the production of anthrax, botulinum toxin and aflatoxin in 1985. After the Persian Gulf War, the country disclosed that it had developed bombs, Scud missiles, 122-mm rockets and artillery shells armed with the aforementioned agents. In 1995, they subsequently admitted to the production of half a million liters of biological agents. According to the United Nations' Special Commission, the amount was significantly higher than those cited in official statements. For this reason, Iraq, in addition to many of the other nations listed above, have come



SOFIMUN
Sofia International Model United Nations

Edition: 1/2008
Period: 20-27 July 2008
Location: Sofia, Bulgaria

Website: www.sofimun.org
Forum: www.forum.sofimun.org
Media space: www.press.sofimun.org
E-mail: info@sofimun.org

"Search Of Future Ideas, Models Us Now"

COMMITTEE:
CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CHAIRPERSON:
ANDREA BERGER & GEORGE NICOLOV

TOPIC: (A) – BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

BACKGROUND GUIDE

under harsh criticism, spurring the necessity to create a regime efficient in deterring and counteracting such developments.

Examples of already used biological agents, occurred incidents and counter measures:

- The so called "Oregon Salmonella Incident" (October 1984) when 751 people were infected after followers of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh contaminated restaurant salad bars;
- After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, prominent politicians and media employees in the US were exposed to anthrax spores through contaminated mail. Four deaths were registered;
- In December 2002, six terrorist suspects were arrested in Manchester, England, after their apartment was turned into a ricin laboratory.

The first multilateral agreement that focused on the prohibition of biological agents was the Geneva Protocol of 1925, which was signed by 108 nations. Unfortunately, this Protocol doesn't have a method for verification. Thus, most countries submitted reservations when becoming parties to the Geneva Protocol declaring that they only regarded the non-use obligations as applying to other parties and that these obligations would cease to apply if the prohibited weapons were used against them.



The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction, commonly known as the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) or Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), opened for signature in 1972 and entered into force three years later, in 1975. This is the first multilateral disarmament treaty that bans an entire category of weapons. According to the BWC, states parties have undertaken that they shall, in accordance with their constitutional processes, take the necessary measures to prohibit and prevent the development, production, stockpiling, acquisition or retention of biological agents, toxins, weapons, equipment and means of delivery.

Currently, the BWC has 161 States Parties. However, it has come under fire for lack of an effective verification mechanism, making much of the convention relatively toothless. Without a method of ensuring compliance to the regime, the threat of the proliferation of biological weapons will persist.

Therefore, the SOFIMUN CD may consider possible methods of establishing such a verification procedure in order to strengthen the existing treaty. This will be a point of high



SOFIMUN
Sofia International Model United Nations

Edition: 1/2008
Period: 20-27 July 2008
Location: Sofia, Bulgaria

Website: www.sofimun.org
Forum: www.forum.sofimun.org
Media space: www.press.sofimun.org
E-mail: info@sofimun.org

"Search Of Future Ideas, Models Us Now"

COMMITTEE:
CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CHAIRPERSON:
ANDREA BERGER & GEORGE NICOLOV

TOPIC: (A) – BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

BACKGROUND GUIDE

contention for the CD, as the details of potential verification mechanisms may touch on the nerves of state sovereignty for a number of nations. The work of the Ad Hoc group, which was mandated to draft provisions for a verification mechanism, was rejected at the 2001 Review Conference as a result of the sudden repeal of support by the United States. Since that time, verification efforts in their former understanding have all but ceased to exist. This difficulty is framed by the "dual-use" technology in the field life sciences: the research and technology which are used to develop BW are also those used to develop defensive and civil (such as vaccination) capabilities (permitted under the BTWC)

An avenue which the SOFIMUN CD may more realistically pursue at the current time (although discussion of verification is welcomed) is the strengthening and simplification of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) which have become an integral component of Review Conference agendas following 2001. Currently, CBMs have extremely low participation rates amongst certain state groups, and increasing their utility is seen by many nations to be linked to a strong increase in the confidence and transparency they are designed to elicit.

The creation of an independent organization to oversee the BTWC and the implementation of its provisions has also been a topic for discussion. Currently, the BTWC is maintained only by the Implementation Support Unit (three staff members in the UN Office of Geneva) and logistical support for review and inter-sessional conferences by the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs. The creation of an independent organization may better facilitate and encourage states to properly complete their annual declarations and CBMs, and may also provide the permanency and support, the lack of which non-states party have identified as a concern.

In recent years there have also been widespread concerns that certain well-funded terrorist groups may obtain the necessary expertise and technologies needed for the acquisition and development of biological weapons. Thus, highly motivated groups are increasingly capable of performing an attack using such agents (Al-Qaeda, for instance, has declared its intention to use biological weapons). Currently, no concrete evidence exists that any terrorist organization has obtained biological weapons. However, there is a substantial risk that they are capable to develop biological weapons independently.



The SOFIMUN Conference on Disarmament will focus on the proliferation of biological weapons as a serious threat to global security. It may also discuss ways to raise threat awareness and may encourage deepening of the existing efforts for cooperation on bioterrorism. Possible ways through which certain groups or states may acquire biological agents (such as theft from research laboratories,



SOFIMUN
Sofia International Model United Nations

Edition: 1/2008
Period: 20-27 July 2008
Location: Sofia, Bulgaria

Website: www.sofimun.org
Forum: www.forum.sofimun.org
Media space: www.press.sofimun.org
E-mail: info@sofimun.org

"Search Of Future Ideas, Models Us Now"

COMMITTEE:
CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CHAIRPERSON:
ANDREA BERGER & GEORGE NICOLOV

TOPIC: (A) – BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

BACKGROUND GUIDE

acquisition of commercially available poisons, black market activity, etc.) and the necessary counter measures for their prevention to do so may be taken into account within the proposals of the committee.

The CD will most importantly have to evaluate the need and possible methods of strengthening the existing regimes countering biological weapons. They may do so by, for instance, proposing possible verification mechanisms for the Biological Weapons Convention, additional or refined Confidence Building Measures, or an independent organization to oversee the BTWC implementation. The SOFIMUN CD may also discuss possibilities of promoting the harmonization of domestic legislation which would criminalize activities related to biological weapons. Regional cooperation and coordination is vital in this respect. Today, in many countries there are no adequate legal frameworks governing the detection and repression of this type of activity (bio-weapons). The creation and promotion of a comprehensive regime against biological weapons will be a difficult but necessary task for the CD to undertake. If carefully executed with the support of the international community, such changes could become central to the non-proliferation of dangerous agents and weapons of this variety.



SOFIMUN
Sofia International Model United Nations

Edition: 1/2008
Period: 20-27 July 2008
Location: Sofia, Bulgaria

Website: www.sofimun.org
Forum: www.forum.sofimun.org
Media space: www.press.sofimun.org
E-mail: info@sofimun.org

"Search Of Future Ideas, Models Us Now"

COMMITTEE:
CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CHAIRPERSON:
ANDREA BERGER & GEORGE NICOLOV

TOPIC: (A) – BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Suggested Reading and Additional Sources

Topic A: Biological Weapons

The Geneva Protocol of 1925:

<http://www.fas.org/nuke/control/geneva/text/geneva1.htm>

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) Website:

<http://www.opbw.org/>

Please note specifically

- a) the final documents and statements made by States Party at the Inter Review Conference in December 2007 and the Sixth Review Conference
- b) the Legally Binding Instrument Primer (http://www.opbw.org/lbi/docs/lbi_primer.pdf)
- c) the Annex on Confidence Building Measures (http://www.opbw.org/rev_cons/3rc/docs/conf/BWC_Conf.III_23_PartII_Annex_E.pdf)

The Biological Weapons Convention:

[http://www.unog.ch/80256EE600585943/\(httpPages\)/04FBBDD6315AC720C1257180004B1B2F?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/80256EE600585943/(httpPages)/04FBBDD6315AC720C1257180004B1B2F?OpenDocument)

The Australia Group:

<http://www.australiagroup.net/en/index.html>

Combating Biological Weapons:

http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2002/issue2/0202p73_combating_biological_weapons.html

The Harvard Sussex Program. The regime against CBW:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/spru/hsp/Harvard-Sussex-Program-regime-overview.htm>