IPU Regional Seminar on Engaging Parliaments of the Pacific Region in the implementation of SCR 1540

Regional Cooperation and awareness-raising to promote the Biological Weapons Convention

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Why is awareness-raising important for...

disarmament | international weapon regimes | the Biological Weapons Convention?
The world is overarmed and peace is underfunded

OpEd by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon
27 August 2012 | Eurasia Review
For More Information on Military Expenditures

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)
The United Nations Report on Military Spending
Disarmament - A Basic Guide (see chapter 2 on Global Military Expenditures)
How is this relevant to the Biological Weapons Convention?
Infectious diseases DO NOT respect borders (and do not require passports)
New technologies and science developments relate to the Biological Weapons Convention and they can lead to both: positive use and potential misuse.
For example... DNA

What is DNA?
By 2022, the genomics business is expected to be worth: **24 billion USD**

Health and environmental research have become main targets

New targets: Start ups, small companies and the general public.

Why? **Low prices** for DNA sequencing: technology and instruments

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Figure 1: World map of genomic companies and research institutes (year 2018).
1. Companies that offer Gene Therapy (editing)
1. (not only) companies that offer Gene Therapy (editing)

The CRISPR-baby scandal: what’s next for human gene-editing

As concerns surge after a bombshell revelation, here are four questions about this fast-moving field.

David Cyranoski

Russian biologist plans more CRISPR-edited babies

The proposal follows a Chinese scientist who claimed to have created twins from edited embryos last year.

David Cyranoski
2. Companies that offer direct consumer genetic testing
3. Companies that sell Do-It-Yourself Biology

At Amino Labs, our goal is to make teaching genetic engineering accessible, fun and affordable.
4. Companies that buy/sell genetic data
5. Companies doing Synthetic Biology

- Synthetic biology applies engineering, design, and computer science principles to biology, usually at the DNA level.
- In 2018, 98 companies raised 3.8 billion USD. Governments invested 50 million in them.
Do you think that any of these technologies can be used as a channel to create a bioweapon, even in states with no intent to do so?
Main Takeaways
Advances in science and technology have moved at an unprecedented pace in the last decade. Developments that were unthinkable just years ago [such as gene editing and biotechnology advances] are currently underway and could have a very significant impact on the BWC and the global community.
How is this relevant to most United Nations Member States?
Disarmament and the Sustainable Development Goals

3. Good Health and Well-being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
How does the UN raise awareness and promote regional cooperation on the BWC?
EU Council Decision 2019/97
-At a glance-

1. Promoting universal adherence to the BWC
2. Developing national capacity to implement BWC
3. Fostering biosecurity networks in the Global South
4. Supporting the Ninth BWC Review Conference
5. Preparedness to prevent and respond to a biothreat
6. Developing awareness-raising and engagement tools
Universalisation

Objective
Promoting universal adherence to the BWC by encouraging States not party to better understand the benefits of joining the BWC

Activities
Follow-up outreach will continue to support universalization activities conducted under EU Council Decision 2016/51

- Four in-country universalization activities over the course of 2020-2021 (for the Pacific, Africa and Haiti)
- Two regional workshops for BWC States not party (for the Pacific and Africa)
Regional Universalisation Workshop for the Pacific
Nadi, Fiji, 27-28 July 2017
Universalisation Workshop for IGAD
Djibouti, Djibouti, 3-4 October 2018
AU-UNODA Universalisation Workshop
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 11-12 December 2018
Science and Technology Workshops on the Biological Weapons Convention 2017-2018
The Art of Multilateral Diplomacy

• What the UN/diplomats/experts say
The Art of Multilateral Diplomacy

- What decision-makers/officials hear
Building the bridge: communicating international treaties for decision-making
Main conclusions

Continued education and outreach = imperative

[including awareness-raising at the community level and in local languages on topics such as dual-use research, biosafety and biosecurity]
Main conclusions

South-South cooperation is key = more transferable + relatable experiences
Main conclusions

Preparedness is the best and most effective way to prevent biohazards, to handle the outbreak of infectious diseases, and the emergence of epidemics.
Key Takeaway

Biosecurity is a shared [collective] responsibility: at the international, regional and national level!
For more information...

www.unog.ch/bwc

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