

**Research Group for  
Biological Arms Control**



Statement by the

**Research Group for Biological Arms Control**  
Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker Centre for Science and  
Peace Research at the University of Hamburg, Germany

to the Meeting of States Parties to the Biological and  
Toxin Weapons Convention

10 - 14 December 2015  
Geneva, Switzerland



Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker-  
Centre for Science  
and Peace Research

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Representatives,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I make this statement on behalf of the Research Group for Biological Arms Control at the Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker Centre for Science and Peace Research at the University of Hamburg in Germany. The mission of our Research Group is to contribute, through innovative research and outreach activities, to the universal prevention of biological weapons development, production and use.

Our activities have two main focuses: First, we work to prevent the erosion of the universal bioweapons prohibition by opposing activities that violate treaty obligations. Second, we develop new concepts and instruments to monitor activities relevant to bioweapons, and to verify and enforce compliance with the regulations against them.

Mr Chairman,

The potential threat by biological weapons deserves a regime that is capable to tackle the threats - this includes the ability to be informed about activities with relevance for both the prohibitive regulations and the promotion of technical cooperation. To make the BWC future proof, States Parties have yet to find effective ways to enable the regime informing itself about relevant developments in the field it regulates.

To this end the set-up of an institutionalized interdisciplinary scientific advice is overdue - ideally it would be organised in a way that the provided analysis stays independent from political interests.

More than that, we would like to advocate for the promotion of transparency as central means to foster confidence in compliance in the BWC. An institutionalised information gathering could also provide the debate about the implementation of article X with empirical groundwork. With a sufficient degree of information exchange article X could even develop a confidence building role.

In one of our current projects we explore how Open Source Information can be applied to strengthen biological arms control by the gathering and combining these relevant data. We recognised the fact that various multilateral treaty regimes in all kinds of policy fields, including arms control, make use of Open Source Information already, either to be updated about relevant developments or even to feed transparency mechanisms that connect to

compliance issues. In a way this is not more than the adaptation to the revolution in IT-technologies and the current status quo in this field. States can hardly act any longer as if transparency building could be reduced to official declarations.

In this regard we would like to invite you to attend the side event "Let's talk about compliance: measures, methods, and modalities", which we will hold jointly with the Harvard Sussex Programme and Jean Pascal Zanders on Tuesday at 9am in Room XXIV where we will address the link of compliance and Open Source Information in more detail.

Mr. Chairman,

We consider this all the more important as the functionality of the one available transparency mechanism in the BWC regime remains limited. The number of States who have submitted a CBM persists on a level which cannot be considered satisfactory. As of 1<sup>st</sup> December only 71 of the total 173 treaty members had submitted a CBM in 2015. Despite this fact, we applaud those states that participate in the CBM mechanism. 30 of the 71 submitting states also decided to use the CBM mechanism not only as an inter-state transparency mechanism, but to actively promote public transparency by releasing their CBM to the general public on the ISU website, or by sending their CBM directly to us. As in the previous years, the Research Group for Biological Arms Control has summarized the information of the publicly available CBMs in a reader, which is available at the door.

Mr. Chairman,

We are optimistic that States Parties will successfully set the course for the 8th Review Conference. Since the collapse of the verification protocol States Parties have maintained dialogue in the format of the Intersessional Processes. While in the first years dialogue was a value *per se*, latest with the ISP that comes to an end with the meeting this week, it became clear, however, that the future needs a format that would make substantial progress more likely. We see the challenges for the development of a more targeted but none the less inclusive approach, and hope therefore for an intense and ambitious preparatory process.

Thank you Mr. Chairman