

**AD HOC GROUP OF THE STATES PARTIES
TO THE CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION
OF THE DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCTION AND
STOCKPILING OF BACTERIOLOGICAL
(BIOLOGICAL) AND TOXIN WEAPONS
AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION**

BWC/AD HOC GROUP/WP.414
17 March 2000

ENGLISH

Original: SPANISH

Nineteenth session
Geneva, 13 - 31 March 2000

Working paper submitted by Spain

**REPORT ON A TRIAL TRANSPARENCY VISIT TO A BIOLOGICAL
DEFENSIVE FACILITY**

I. BASIC DATA

1. The visit took place on 5 November 1999, to a Ministry of Defence biological defence laboratory working on biological defence and environmental activities of relevance to defence.
2. The kind of visit selected was a transparency visit, concentrating on one of the three objectives assigned by the Rolling Text to visits of this kind: promoting accuracy of declarations.
3. The visiting team comprised four officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Health, Education and Defence. Since this was the first visit of its kind in the biological field, the team was introduced by a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The team was accompanied by logistical escort personnel from the Spanish Verification Unit of the Ministry of Defence.
4. Owing to the availability of the officials on the visiting team, and in order not disturb the normal operation of the facility, the duration of the visit had to be kept to one working day although everyone was aware from the outset that a full visit, such as would be conducted in a real case, could not be carried out in such a short period.

II. PREPARATIONS

5. Plans for the visit were drawn up by members of the Working Group for the Prohibition of Biological Weapons in Spain (GRUPABI), which arranged preparatory

information meetings for members of the visiting team and scheduled the activities to take place during it.

6. Given that the aim of the visit was to emphasize the clarity and the correct and full preparation of the declaration, the facility was sent an advance copy of the declaration form similar in content to the one contained in the Rolling Text from the September 1999 meeting.

7. Once the facility had filled in the form, it was analysed by GRUPABI with a view to framing the questions to be put to the staff of the facility.

8. On 1 November 1999, four days before the visit, the facility was sent the following documentation:

Notification of the visit

The mandate for the visiting team

A tentative programme.

The facility acknowledged receipt of these documents within 24 hours.

III. THE VISIT

A. Information session (10 a.m. to 12 noon)

9. The visit began at 10 a.m. After a welcome by the management of the Centre, the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained the general objectives of the trial visit and gave a brief description of the verification procedures that would be called for in the protocol currently under negotiation.

10. The Chief of the Biological Defence Department at the facility then explained its structure and functions, which may be summarized as follows:

Research into the diagnostic and prophylactic aspects of biological defence, with the

aim of developing polyvalent vaccines against certain biological agents;

Toxic environmental agent detection programmes;

Collaboration with universities, academic and health institutions.

11. The head of the visiting team commented on the content of the trial declaration, referring to a number of specific points on which he sought clarification from the competent staff at the facility.

B. Tour of the facility (12 noon to 12.45 p.m.)

12. This was longer and more thorough than the Rolling Text called for. During the tour, the data necessary to identify what aspects must be emphasized, clarified or gone into in more detail later were gathered.

13. Access to the laboratories provided an opportunity to check quickly on their quality, their levels of biological containment and their capacities for manipulating biological agents.

C. Plan of the visit (12.45 to 1.15 p.m.)

14. On the basis of the information gathered during the information session and the tour of the facility, it was determined that the following needed to be emphasized, clarified or gone into in more detail:

Fermenters

Levels of containment

Treatment of waste

Safety protocols

Records of substances entering and leaving the facility

Programme funding

Preventive care and medical check-ups for the staff.

For this purpose, interviews with those responsible for these various aspects were included in the plan for the visit.

D. Interviews (1.15 to 2.45 p.m.)

15. Interviews were held with the individuals responsible for the following topics:

The fermenters: their quality and state of operation

Waste disposal

Entry checks on vehicles, individuals and belongings

Preventive vaccination

Emergency electricity supply

Miscellaneous.

E. Visit of the facility (4 to 5.30 p.m.)

16. This being the first visit of its type, it was decided to carry it out with the whole team together so that they could become properly acquainted with all aspects of this kind of exercise.

17. A short, selective visual tour was made of the units on which more information was needed. In essence, the following:

The fermenters:

Toxicology programmes

Staff vaccinations

Cultures of agents and their pathogenicity

Biological security of the facilities

Miscellaneous.

F. Recapitulation session and preliminary report (5.30 to 6.45 p.m.)

18. During this period, the visiting team analysed the information it had gathered and drafted a preliminary report which gave the sequence of activities carried out and an initial assessment of how the visit had gone, how effective it had been and the cooperation it had been shown.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

19. As indicated in paragraph 4 above, everyone was aware how little time was to be spent on the visit because of the availability of the officials on the team. Having conducted the visit, it was concluded that, indeed, a visit of this kind cannot effectively be carried out in less than 48 hours. Despite having only one working day available, however, the team had worked at high pressure and the exercise had been instructive and highly useful.

20. Another lesson learned was the importance of a properly drafted plan of the visit, and for this the information session and tour of the facility were vital.

21. On the subject of the information session, it must be emphasized that the presentation by the staff of the facility must not be reduced in length since information may emerge which can give pointers to the subsequent visit.

22. A tour of the facility is regarded as essential. It should not last less than one hour and, if it is to be effective, some access to particular facilities must be allowed. Without this, the tour could be reduced to a simple stroll.

23. Lastly, mention must be made of the extensive cooperation offered by the staff of the facility - which was to be expected, since it is a national publicly-owned facility. Problems may arise in the case of a private national or international facility.

Madrid, 10 March 2000

- - - - -