



**National Defense
Medical College**



**UNIVERSITY OF
BRADFORD**
MAKING KNOWLEDGE WORK

STATEMENT BY

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ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL DEFENSE MEDICAL COLLEGE

AND

UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD

TO

THE MEETING OF EXPERTS IN AUGUST 2009 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

Monday 24 August 2009

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Representatives. It is a great honour to be invited to make a Statement to the Meeting of Experts of the States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) which I am doing on behalf of the National Defense Medical College in Japan and the Department of Peace Studies of the University of Bradford in the United Kingdom with the explicit endorsement of the Vice President of the National Defense Medical College and the Vice Chancellor of the University of Bradford.

Mr. Chairman, the topic for the Meeting of Experts of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) 2009 is:

(v) With a view to enhancing international cooperation, assistance and exchange in biological sciences and technology for peaceful purposes, promoting capacity building in the fields of disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis, and containment of infectious diseases: (1) for States Parties in need of assistance, identifying requirements and requests for capacity enhancement; and (2) from States Parties in a position to do so, and international organizations, opportunities for providing assistance related to these fields.

Improving these capabilities necessarily involves the building up of biotechnology facilities and the number of people with capacities in biotechnology. However, it is clear that there is at present a very low level of awareness of biosecurity and dual-use issues amongst the life science community worldwide.

At the Meeting of States Parties of the BTWC in December 2008, the University of Bradford in the UK and the Landau Network-Centro Volta in Italy circulated a report on an investigation of university level biosecurity education provision in Europe. This report demonstrated that in the sample of 146 courses only 3 dedicated biosecurity modules were found and all of these were optional for students.

In early 2009 a similar study of university level provision of biosecurity education in Japan was carried out by the National Defense Medical College in Japan and the University of Bradford and a report of this study was presented to Ambassadors for this meeting in late July. The main findings of the study are as follows. The investigation in Japan involved 197 life science degree courses at 62 universities. Again only 3 specific biosecurity modules were identified in the investigated courses.

Thus, these surveys in different parts of the world have produced very similar results. There appears to be very little biosecurity educational provision for life scientists. It also seems reasonable to conclude that this is a major contributory factor leading to the lack of awareness of biosecurity issues amongst life scientists in Europe and Japan, and furthermore, that such lack of provision of education is a major contributory factor to the lack of awareness found in other regions and countries.

Mr. Chairman, at the December's Meeting, States Parties reiterated that their view that:

...formal requirements for seminars, modules or courses, including possible mandatory components, in relevant scientific and engineering training programmes and continuing professional education could assist in raising awareness and in implementing the Convention.

In this regard follow-up interviews and correspondence with university lecturers following the survey of biosecurity education provision in Europe suggested that there were a series of difficulties that caused the lack of provision of such education*. Therefore, following the initial survey of university level biosecurity in Japan we made a more systematic attempt to elucidate the causes of the lack of provision of biosecurity education by sending a questionnaire to 100 universities.

Although the response return from 48 departments in 24 universities does not permit quantitative analyses, it does illustrate the difficulties faced by university lecturers. We found that the responses to our questionnaire indicated that there was an:

- absence of space in the existing curricula;
- absence of time and resources to develop new curricula;
- absence of expertise and available literature on biosecurity education; and an
- absence of interest in biosecurity education.

We would suggest that lecturers in other parts of the world are likely to face similar difficulties and we would therefore urge that at this meeting careful consideration is given to the issue of how adequate biosecurity education is to be enhanced in parallel with developing capacity “*in international cooperation, assistance and exchange in biological sciences and technology for peaceful purposes, promoting capacity building in the fields of disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis, and containment of infectious diseases*”.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Representatives.

*In order to mitigate the current deficiency in awareness amongst life scientists, the National Defence Medical College in Japan and the Bradford Disarmament Research Centre of the University of Bradford in the UK have been working to produce an educational module resource (EMR) to explain the problem to life scientists. Details of the EMR will be presented at the **Poster Session** of this meeting on Thursday 27 August 2009.