

Voluntary Transparency Initiatives: The Case of Peer Review Exercises in the Context of the BWC

MARÍA J. ESPONA



Appendix: Matrix of past peer review exercises (PRE)

LOCATION AND DATE	MAIN OBJECTIVES	FOCUS	STAKEHOLDERS	EXERCISE PROCESS	RESULTS
FRANCE Paris and Maisons-Alfort 4–6 December 2013 ¹	Provide proof of concept of the PRE proposal submitted by France.	<p>The national biosafety and biosecurity system, including the national authorization and control system for manipulating dangerous pathogens.</p> <p>The national export control system with a focus on the licensing procedures for dual-use biological materials and related equipment.</p> <p>Awareness raising policy, including the courses, trainings and guidelines on biosafety and biosecurity implemented by different institutions.</p>	<p>National experts from: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Strategic Affairs and Disarmament Department), the French National Agency for Medicines and Health Products Safety (ANSM), the Ministry of Industrial Renewal, the Pasteur Institute of the Ministry of Health, the Animal Health Laboratory of the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety (ANSES), the National Institute for Health and Medical Research (INSERM) and the French Military Health Service.</p> <p>Other state party experts from: Canada, China, Germany, India, Mexico, Morocco, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.</p> <p>National non-governmental experts from the Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique (FRS).</p>	<p>Presentations by technical experts on the three areas of focus, followed by visits to two laboratories: first, the unit created by the French Ministry of Health at the Pasteur Institute to respond to specialized biological emergencies (Cellule d'Intervention Biologique d'Urgence – CIBU) in Paris; second, the ANSES Animal Health Laboratory in Maisons-Alfort.</p>	<p>The PRE was considered useful as a transparency tool that could strengthen confidence between the parties. The visits to laboratories were particularly useful.</p> <p>It was considered useful to strengthen national implementation through identifying gaps and good practices, both for France and for other participating states.</p> <p>Some indicated that it would be useful to expand the focus to other areas (e.g. response to alleged use and international cooperation), while others would have preferred a narrower focus.</p> <p>It was proposed to make use of available tools under the BWC to share best practices and information identified in the PRE with all states parties.</p> <p>Some participants were sceptical about how useful implementing a PRE through the BWC would be and indicated a preference for a more formal verification regime instead.</p>

¹ <https://undocs.org/BWC/MSP/2013/WP.8> <https://undocs.org/BWC/CONF.VII/WP.28> <https://undocs.org/BWC/MSP/2014/WP.3>

Appendix: Matrix of past peer review exercises (PRE) continued

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BELGIUM LUXEMBOURG and the NETHER- LANDS Brussels, Dudelange, Esch-Sur Alzette, Rijswijk, Bilthoven June to November 2015 ²	<p>Improve the implementation of the Convention at the national level through the review of elements of national implementation and the sharing of best practices.</p> <p>Contribute to building confidence between states parties.</p> <p>Raising awareness of BWC among national stakeholders, encouraging participation in relevant inter-agency initiatives.</p> <p>Contribute to discussion at the Eighth BWC Review Conference by presenting the PRE experience.</p> <p>Enable feedback on CBMs and increasing their role as a declaration tool within the Convention.</p>	<p>National biological military research and development programmes and research centres and laboratories (as declared in CBM Form A).</p> <p>National legislation, regulations, and other measures related to BWC implementation (as declared in CBM Form E), focusing on national oversight of biosafety and biosecurity.</p>	<p>National experts from the departments of defence, public health, and foreign affairs of the three states parties.</p>	<p>Written phase in which experts from each country assessed Forms A and E of one another's 2015 CBMs.</p> <p>In-person phase in each state party that included a meeting to clarify points on the shared CBM forms and visits to the following relevant facilities declared in the Form A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Centre for Applied Molecular Technologies of the Defence Laboratory Department in Brussels, Belgium, on 9 November. • The Health National Laboratory in Dudelange, and the Institute of Health in Esch-Sur Alzette, Luxembourg, on 17 November. • The Organisation for Applied Scientific Research in Rijswijk and the National Institute of Public Health and the Environment in Bilthoven, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, on 27 November. 	<p>The PRE format (written phase followed by in-country visits) was found useful in improving national implementation, increasing international cooperation and raising awareness of the BWC among national stakeholders.</p> <p>Participants indicated that the process provided in-depth feedback on CBMs, improving the accessibility and relevance of the CBMs of the participating countries.</p> <p>Participants identified the value of organizing a preparatory meeting ahead of the in-person visit to increase its effectiveness.</p>

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GERMANY Munich 2–4 August 2016 ³	<p>Test whether a peer review visit could serve as a tool to increase transparency with regard to research and development activities.</p> <p>Contribute to the relevance and value of the peer review concept.</p> <p>Share best practices, discuss national implementation systems, raise awareness and establish contacts that could serve to increase international cooperation.</p>	<p>Compliance assessment of a military facility, including among other things: laboratory activities and equipment, infrastructure, security measures, laboratory conduct, documentation in relation to research and development, as well as procedures for the transfer and export of pathogens and toxins.</p>	<p>National experts from: the Federal Foreign Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Bundeswehr, the Bundeswehr Verification Centre, the Bundeswehr Institute of Microbiology and the German Partnership Programme for Excellence in Biological and Health Security.</p> <p>Other state party experts and civil society experts from: Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Burundi, France, Georgia, Indonesia, Jordan, Lithuania, Myanmar, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Uganda, the United Kingdom the United States and Yemen.</p>	<p>Visit to a military research facility declared in the German CBM Form A, part 2 (iii): the Bundeswehr Institute of Microbiology in Munich.</p> <p>Participants were organized in two groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visiting team: four biology experts and six observers participated in a pre-visit briefing and a tour of the facility. • Monitoring team: ten participants monitored the exercise and attended presentations about legal and policy matters, biosecurity and biosafety. <p>The visiting team prepared a summary report in collaboration with the monitoring team and the facility staff. The report was discussed between the participants in the final session.</p>	<p>The report highlighted that the objectives of the exercise were met.</p> <p>It was considered that visits could be an appropriate means of increasing transparency and demonstrating a facility's compliance with the BWC.</p> <p>Visits were also considered useful for the exchange of good practices among all participants.</p> <p>The report included suggestions for the planning and methodology that could be used in a compliance assessment of a military facility.</p>

³ <https://undocs.org/BWC/CONF.VIII/WP.11> <https://undocs.org/BWC/CONF.VIII/WP.29> Filippa Lentzos, "Increasing transparency in biodefense: a 2016 visit to a German military medical biodefence facility", Non-Proliferation Papers no. 52, (EU Non-Proliferation Consortium, November 2016).

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MOROCCO Rabat and Casablanca 9–11 May 2017 ⁴	<p>To strengthen national implementation of the BWC; to improve confidence in compliance by increased transparency; and to deepen international cooperation.</p> <p>A further overarching objective was to broaden support for the peer review mechanism concept.</p>	Biosafety, biosecurity, biorisk and pathogen management measures.	<p>National experts from: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Trade, the National Defence, the Gendarmerie Royale, the Ministry of Higher Education, and the Ministry of Agriculture.</p> <p>Other state party experts from: Belgium, China, France, Gabon, Germany, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Spain, the United Arab Emirates and the United States.</p> <p>National non-governmental experts from two biosafety associations: the Moroccan Biosafety Association and the Moroccan Biosafety, Biosecurity and Sanitary Security Association.</p> <p>One representative from the BWC Implementation Support Unit.</p>	<p>One day of seminars and presentations on, inter alia, the Moroccan implementation of the BWC, the national system for detection and handling of pathogens, and disease surveillance and export control measures.</p> <p>Two days of visits to five institutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Institute for Safety of Food Products, in Rabat • Animal vaccine production facility of the company Biopharma, in Rabat • Moulay Youssef Hospital, in Casablanca • National Institute of Hygiene, in Rabat • Pasteur Institute of Morocco, in Casablanca <p>The following year a seminar was organized to develop an action plan to implement the recommendations agreed during the PRE.</p>	<p>Presentations on both existing measures and gaps in national implementation were found to be helpful for experts to generate recommendations.</p> <p>The contributions of civil society experts were recognised as useful.</p> <p>The PRE generated recommendations for Morocco regarding legislation, the development of a national program for BWC implementation and a BWC awareness-raising campaign. Notably, a follow-up seminar was organized to implement these recommendations.</p>

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<p>GEORGIA</p> <p>Tbilisi</p> <p>14–15 November 2018⁵</p>	<p>Demonstrate that the Richard Lugar Center for Public Health Research complies with the provisions and obligations of the BWC, and that the activities taking place have peaceful purposes and are consistent with the information provided in the relevant CBM form.</p>	<p>Biological research activities and other relevant aspects of the Richard Lugar Center, including its biological safety level 3 laboratory.</p>	<p>National experts from: the Richard Lugar Center for Public Health Research of the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.</p> <p>Other state party experts from: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Germany, Hungary, Iraq, Italy, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mali, Montenegro, Myanmar, Uganda, the United Kingdom and the United States.</p> <p>Observers from the European External Action Service and the BWC Implementation Support Unit.</p> <p>One observer from a non-governmental organization, King's College London.</p>	<p>During the first day, participants were split into two equally sized teams, which each undertook a tour of the facility and discussed research activities.</p> <p>On the second day, four participants entered the Biosafety Level 3 laboratory, while others examined the facility premises.</p> <p>At the closing session, participants undertook a final assessment of the exercise. A report was drafted by the international visiting team's leader.</p>	<p>The participants concluded that on-site visits can reconcile a high level of transparency with the legitimate security and intellectual property interests of the visited facility.</p>

⁵ <https://undocs.org/BWC/MSP/2018/WP.5> <https://undocs.org/BWC/MSP/2018/MX.3/WP.2>

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KYRGYZSTAN Issyk Kul 16–18 August 2022 Preparatory work: Geneva, Switzerland, 12–14 October 2021 ⁶	Strengthen national implementation. Enhance international cooperation.	National legal framework and related matters, including the draft biosafety law under development. A comprehensive national approach to biosafety and biosecurity. Opportunities for international cooperation and assistance.	National experts from: the Ministry of Economy and Commerce, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the Ministry of Defence, the State Committee on National Security, the State Customs Service, the General Staff of Armed Forces, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Public Health Institute and the Center for Non-proliferation and Export Control. Other state party experts from: Georgia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the United States and Uzbekistan. Observers from eight international and regional organizations, including the BWC Implementation Support Unit.	Preparatory phase that included in-person and virtual meetings in Geneva, Switzerland, 12–14 October 2021. Exercise in Kyrgyzstan that included presentations describing the country’s situation and discussions. A visit to the Cholpon-Ata city laboratory was planned but didn’t take place.	The exercise helped identify good practices and recommendations for the review and finalization of the biosecurity legislation. The mapping the different institutions’ responsibilities resulted in the identification of how to enhance inter-institutional coordination formally. The exercise helped to identify in which specific areas assistance is required and how to prepare the official request in the framework of Article X of the BWC.

6 <https://undocs.org/BWC/CONF.IX/WP.52> Kyrgyz Republic, “Meeting summary: peer review exercise under EU Council decision 2019/97 in support of the Biological Weapons Convention – preparatory meeting on the conduct of a BWC peer review exercise in the Kyrgyz Republic, International conference Center Geneva, 12–14 October 2021”, pp. 1–2.