



**High Level Exchange with the High Representative for
Disarmament Affairs and other High-Level Officials in the field
of arms control and disarmament
“Preventing and responding to attacks using CBRN materials”**

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Chairperson, His Excellency Ambassador Sabri Boukadoum
 President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Ambassador Peter Thomson
 Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

My thanks to the Chair for convening today's event. I also want to thank the President of the General Assembly for his insightful statement and each of our international partners - Mr Michael Moller, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament; Mr Patrick Grenard, of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization; Mr. Kai Chen, of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; and Mr Xolisa Mabhongo, of the International Atomic Energy Agency – for agreeing to participate and travelling all the way to be here today.

Today I want to focus on an issue that should be of concern for us all. That is the threat and risk relating to chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) material. This threat is growing and becoming increasingly real.

We live in a challenging and fast evolving security environment. Vicious non-state actors have taken territory, committed atrocities and shown no respect for human life. It is well-documented that these groups will do everything possible to acquire and use a CBRN weapon.

Toxic chemicals continue to be used as weapons of war in the Middle East. Disturbing reports have also emerged about terrorist group's contemplation of attacks on nuclear power plants. The recent Ebola outbreak demonstrated how quickly a disease or pathogen can spread and wreak havoc – havoc that would have been even worse in the case of a deliberate release targeted to inflict maximum infection.

This threat is exacerbated by a global technological revolution. The same technology that can drive development could also multiply the consequences of a CBRN attack.

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

The international community now must step up its efforts to enhance prevention and preparedness. Today I would like to focus on the following three priorities.

First, the forthcoming Review Conference of the Biological Weapons and Toxins Convention (BWC). I would be remiss if I did not recognise the presence of the President elect, Ambassador György Molnár of Hungary. Thank you for your globetrotting engagement.

When it entered into force in 1975, the BWC was the first treaty to outlaw an entire category of WMD. Yet its institutional base is still the weakest as there is nothing similar to the OPCW or IAEA.

Global response capabilities in case of a biological incident are unclear and untested. Such an incident would certainly become a complex international health and humanitarian emergency, disrupting law and order.

The upcoming Review Conference in November is particularly important due to three conflating factors: First, the growing threat of a deliberate biological attack; second, the absence of an institutionalised response mechanism; and third, technological advances that could make it easier to acquire biological weapons.

A revitalised BWC is in everyone's interest and I hope all States Parties are united in this purpose.

Article VII of the BWC obliges States parties to provide assistance in the case of a biological weapons attack. However, there are no established state-to-state coordination mechanisms, let alone multilateral ones. The Review Conference could build on intersessional discussions to strengthen Article VII, including how to coordinate with the UN and the World Health Organisation (WHO) in case of a biological attack.

We cannot wait until it is too late, being forced to respond to the consequences of a biological attack. The consequences of inaction will be much greater than the costs of acting now.

On keeping pace with technological advances, Article XII specifically mandates the Review Conference to take into account new developments, both positive and negative. There have been wide-spread calls to improve how the BWC handles science and technology issues. We hope the Review Conference will consider the many suggested approaches, such as reinforcing the Implementation Support Unit with technical expertise, and find the most optimal mechanism that ensures the BWC is able to stay ahead of the technological curve.

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The second priority is the Comprehensive Review of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004). For the past twelve years, Resolution 1540 has addressed a critical gap in WMD non-proliferation by targeting non-state actors. It has become – in the words of Secretary-General Ban – an important component of the global security architecture.

The Comprehensive Review, due to be finalised in December, is an opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved, but also to ensure the resolution remains fit for purpose.

On biological security, the Review could encourage stronger measures related to accounting for and securing material. This lags behind chemical and nuclear measures.

On radiological threats, the resolution's preamble recognises radioactive material as a sensitive material in need of effective accounting and security measures. By adopting operative language on radiological sources, the Review could help strengthen the security of radiological sources.

The capacity gap in national implementation also needs to be addressed. States' needs must be better matched with donor expertise and funds. The Review could consider how to use the expertise of the 1540 Committee to be helpful to national implementation.

The Review is also an opportunity to think through the implications of emerging technology that can increase the risk of WMD use and proliferation. It could consider ways in which the Committee can keep ahead of these technological changes.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Spain and Ambassador Roman Oyarzun Marchesi, Chair of the 1540 Committee, for the leadership displayed throughout the Review.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to support the Committee in any way possible.

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Thirdly, I want to highlight the need to strengthen the operational capacity and readiness of the Secretary-General's Mechanism to investigate allegations of the use of chemical, biological and toxin weapons (SGM).

The SGM was institutionalised by the General Assembly in 1987 and reaffirmed by the Security Council in 1988. It predates the CWC and the OPCW. It still is the only mechanism by which *any* Member State can seek an investigation by the Secretary-General into *any* allegation of the use of chemical or biological weapons. It authorises the Secretary-General to undertake an investigation and ascertain the facts of that allegation.

In the absence of a biological weapons-related institution, it is the *only* international mechanism internationally mandated to investigate the alleged use of biological weapons.

In the cases involving chemical weapons, the OPCW would take the lead in investigations on CWC States Parties. However, as was the case in the Syrian Arab Republic, before Syria joined the CWC, the SGM fills the gap for any allegations which may occur in non-States Parties or in territories not controlled by States Parties.

In the past three decades, the SGM was used three times – twice in 1992 and most recently in the Syrian Arab Republic in 2013, before Syria joined the CWC. I thank Member States for their generous contributions that have allowed us to expand the roster of experts and continue to train those experts.

But, going forward, regular budget support for the SGM deserves a closer look by Member States. We will revert back to Member States on this issue in the near future.

Given the institutional gap in response mechanisms for a biological incident, we need to sharpen the roster of experts to ensure it is capable and readily deployable. This is a top priority for my Office.

I want to thank all of our international partners, in particular the OPCW and the WHO, for their collaboration on the SGM. I want to assure all Member States that the partnership between our international partners will continue to be mutually reinforcing and complementary.

I also want to acknowledge the IAEA's leading role in radiological and nuclear security. I hope that the forthcoming International Conference on Nuclear Security, in early December in Vienna, will build on the momentum established by the Nuclear Security Summit process.

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

This year, the international community marked the 20th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Unfortunately, this was not a cause for celebration but also a sober reminder of our unfinished business.

Last month, at the General Assembly and in Security Council, Member States held two high-level events in an unprecedented way, aimed at bolstering the international norm against nuclear tests and accelerating CTBT's entry into force.

But this is not enough. We must step up efforts to reach our shared destination of a world without nuclear tests as a step toward a world without nuclear weapons. This was the message that the Secretary-General personally brought to Vienna in April for the CTBT@20 commemoration and to the ministerial meeting held last month in New York.

Every ratification matters. I therefore commend Myanmar and Swaziland for joining the Treaty this year. However, I reiterate the Secretary-General's call on those remaining eight Annex 2 states, whose ratification is required to bring the treaty into force, not wait for others but act first. Over twenty non-Annex 2 States also need to accelerate their acts.

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In my opening statement to the plenary last week, I registered the serious issue of non-payment by States of their treaty-based financial obligations.

The immediate concern is the risk posed to the 15th Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Landmine Convention in Santiago next month.

I would like to thank Sweden, Switzerland and the United States for their prompt action following our appeal and the latest payments made, including by Belarus, Croatia, Germany, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands and San Marino. I would also like to thank those States that have pledged payment before the deadline of 26 October. This includes some European Union States, Algeria, New Zealand and Australia.

I welcome these efforts made by a number of countries, and I hope these efforts will be followed by those remaining countries that have outstanding dues. We still have a shortfall, but we will continue to do our best, together with Michael Moller of UNOG and the host government, Chile, to make the Anti-Personnel Landmine Meeting possible.

Finally, I appreciate efforts by States Parties to clarify or correct the status of their payments. We will update the table of late payments and redistribute it to the First Committee as soon as it is ready.

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

The international community is facing many complex security challenges, none of which will be easy to overcome. But by working together we can find solutions. We count on all Member States to lead the way.

I thank you so much.