

The 2004 Asia Regional Workshop
“The Future of the Biotechnology Industry:
Safeguarding the Opportunities and Managing the Risks”
Tuesday, 27 April 2004, Singapore

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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honor to attend this important meeting to discuss the relationship between the biotechnology industry and the emerging international concern of terrorism. First and foremost, I would like to express my appreciation to IISS-US and CIBAC for providing this valuable occasion.

Today, I would like to share with you on the Asian perspective as to how we can best prevent biological weapons and related technologies from falling into the hand of terrorists.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the threats of use of biological weapons and abuse of

biotechnology by non-state actors, including terrorist groups, have increased, as seen in the cases such as the alleged manufacture and spread of botulinum by the Aum Shinrikyo in Japan in 1995, the Anthrax Incidents in the US in 2001 and the allegation of ricin dispersion in the US Federal Senate office buildings in February this year, as well as the discovery of equipment and materials to produce ricin in the UK last year. In light of these incidents, it has become an urgent issue to prepare appropriate counter measures against bio-terrorism in order to maintain the security of the international community as a whole. It is highly necessary to tackle such issues especially in the Asian region, where rapid economic growth and expansion of the industrial infrastructure to have made some countries possible supplier of materials for biological weapons.

2. Current Situation of BWC Strengthening Process

Although the BWC is the sole international convention to comprehensively prohibit biological weapons, it lacks provisions for verification to check the compliance by the State Parties and it has long been pointed out that it is necessary to strengthen the Convention in this area. At the reopened meeting of the Review Conference of BWC in November 2002, the State Parties adopted a three-year work plan to strengthen the Convention. Based on this plan, both experts' and State Parties' meetings will be held for three years to enhance the common understanding in the following five areas: national implementation measures, bio-security, disease surveillance, emergency preparedness and responses, and code of conduct for scientists. Although these five

areas are not stipulated in the Convention, they are considered essential to strengthen BWC and to prevent terrorists from developing biological weapons and abusing biotechnology.

On our part, Japan has been strongly committed to strengthening the BWC and has played an important role in reaching an agreement on the three-year work plan. We would like to reiterate our commitment to working every effort for strengthening the BWC.

3. Current Situation of BWC Implementation in the Asian Region and Japan's Efforts

As I stated at the beginning, the biotechnology industry in the Asian region has been developing rapidly in recent years. However, only a few countries have already enacted specific national legislation to prohibit biological weapons and have established the national implementation measures for the BWC. If this situation continues, non-state actors with terrorist purposes can easily infiltrate the region, but countries in the region cannot respond appropriately to illegal development of biological weapons and abuse of biotechnology.

Against this background, Japan, as a member of this region, places an emphasis on the regional efforts, and for that, we are seeking every route to promote them. For example, at the meeting of State Parties in December last year, we distributed the English translation of Japan's national BWC implementation law as a reference material for those countries that have not yet enacted national implementation law.

Furthermore, in order to enforce national implementation law, we believe that the capacity building assistance will help improve policy-making capacity in countries in need. For this purpose, Japan organized a seminar in Tokyo in September 2003 which contributed to enhancing crisis management capabilities against biological and chemical terrorism for countries in Asia and the Pacific region. Prime Minister Koizumi announced the idea of this seminar at the APEC Summit Meeting in October 2002 and Japan is ready to organize similar seminars once every year for five years to come in order to develop human resources and to share relevant information among participants.

4. Bio-security

With the development of bio-industry and the increase of institutions possessing hazardous biological agents, it is becoming more important to take measures to prevent illicit acquisition of hazardous biological agents by terrorist groups. The bio-security issues were intensively discussed at the BWC meetings last year, which resulted in the State Parties' recognition of its significance.

The United States, which experienced the Anthrax Incident, is leading the world in establishing a bio-security related programs, including the establishment of a guideline for laboratories possessing biological agents, introduction of a registration system and enactment of a new legislation to control the facilities and personnel handling biological agents. On the other hand, the Asian countries including Japan,

though aware of the problem, are still studying concrete measures for the bio-security. In the case of Japan, for example, there is no legislation to regulate the bio-security, but the administrative measures are taken instead to deal with bio-security issues. In this regard, WHO is currently planning to draft in making a guideline for bio-security, and it is expected to come out soon.

Under these circumstances, Japan, with the cooperation of CBACI, released a report on best practices to identify elements and illustrate necessary measures common to all countries to strengthen bio-security at the BWC experts meeting held in August last year, for the purpose of identifying a starting point and prompting other countries to establish bio-security measures. At this workshop, we are prepared to distribute this report as well as the English translation of Japan's national BWC implementation law to those who are interested. We will be obliged if these materials are utilized to improve the bio-security measures in Asian countries.

5. Approaches to Global Issues and Code of Conduct in the Life Science Industry

Biological weapons seem attractive to terrorists' eyes since they can be manufactured at low cost and transferred and disposed easily. Unlike nuclear and chemical weapons, it is difficult to verify the biological weapons by the conventional measures such as declaration and inspection. We must note that global expansion of the biological industry can raise our living standards, but at the same time, it

increases potential risks of illegal acquisition of biological agents and abuse of biotechnology by terrorist groups.

In order to prevent the abuse, the role of the related industry is pivotal. Contribution by the industry would affect the progress of national BWC implementation system and the development of bio-security. Furthermore, cooperation by the industry would be more essential than in the case of chemical weapons, as declaration and inspection by the government alone cannot be sufficient for verification. It is expected that the governments and the industry will cooperate each other more closely in this regard.

The time is now for both the international society and the industry to work together on the biotechnology issues. In this regard, we welcome very much the industry's initiative to urge consideration of a code of conduct. We are going to discuss "Code of Conduct for Scientists" in the framework of BWC strengthening process next year. In this context, the purpose of this workshop, which is for Science Industry to tackle a global issue and to draw up a code of conducts, is very relevant to the BWC strengthening process this year and can contribute considerably to it. Once again, I would like to highly commend the organizers of this seminar for planning such a farsighted workshop.

6. Conclusion

The importance to promote the efforts by the Asian countries to enhance the effectiveness of BWC will grow increasingly from now on. I would like to conclude my remarks by emphasizing Japan's

determination to tackle the biotechnological issues in cooperation with other Asian countries.

Thank you very much for your attention.

<< Reference >>

Japanese working papers submitted in BWC meetings are available at BWC official website (<http://www.opcw.org/>)

Possible Measures for Strengthening Biosecurity, 2003 Meeting of Experts (18-29 August 2003)

http://www.opbw.org/new_process/mx2003/bwc_msp.2003_mx_wp11.pdf

Japan's BWC Implementing Law, 2003 Meeting of State Parties (10-14 November 2003)

http://www.opbw.org/new_process/msp2003/BWC_MSP_2003_WP.05.pdf

http://www.opbw.org/new_process/msp2003/BWC_MSP_2003_WP.05_Add.1.pdf