



***Political Agreements and  
Understandings Reached During the  
2007-2010 Work Program of the  
Biological Weapons Convention***

***Lela Bakanidze, PhD***



***Countering Biological Threats: National Implementation of  
the Biological Weapons Convention and Multinational  
Outbreak Response and Bioterrorism Investigation  
Demonstration, 17-19 May, Tbilisi, Georgia***



# Georgia joined BWC in 1995

- NCDC Statute was approved by the President of Georgia by Presidential Decree # 55 (21.02.2003)
- Excerpts:
  - “detection of agents causing epidemics and outbreaks”, “carrying out surveillance”,
  - “establishing national collection of bacteria and viruses”,
  - ”participation in preparing normative and methodological documentation under its competencies” ...

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs**  
**Department of Disarmament Policy and**  
**Euro – Atlantic Integration**



**Ministry of Health, Labour and**  
**Social Affairs (MoHLSA)**  
**National Center for Disease Control and**  
**Public Health**





# Effective national action for BWC implementation in Georgia

- Legislation and regulations
- Biosafety and Biosecurity
- Oversight of science
- Education and awareness
- Disease surveillance

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http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/10/S1/S12



## REVIEW

## Open Access

### Biosafety and biosecurity as essential pillars of international health security and cross-cutting elements of biological nonproliferation

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#### Abstract

The critical aspects of biosafety, biosecurity, and biocontainment have been in the spotlight in recent years. There have also been increased international efforts to improve awareness of modern practices and concerns with regard to the safe pursuit of life sciences research, and to optimize current oversight frameworks, thereby resulting in decreased risk of terrorist/malevolent acquisition of deadly pathogens or accidental release of a biological agent, and increased safety of laboratory workers. Our purpose is to highlight how the World Health Organization's (WHO) revised International Health Regulations (IHR(2005)), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), and the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1540 overlap in their requirements with regard to biosafety and biosecurity in order to improve the understanding of practitioners and policymakers and maximize the use of national resources employed to comply with internationally-mandated requirements. The broad range of goals of these international instruments, which are linked by the common thread of biosafety and biosecurity, highlight their significance as essential pillars of international health security and cross-cutting elements of biological nonproliferation. The current efforts of the Republic of Georgia to enhance biosafety and biosecurity in accordance with these international instruments are summarized.

and safety, and the trust of populace in its own government, potentially leading to ineffective governance or fragile state collapse. The global biological threat environment is compounded by the possibility of rogue states and/or terrorists deliberately using biological agents as weapons of war. Any such use of a biological agent (whether overtly or covertly) could have potentially devastating consequences on public health or the environment. Achieving effective, comprehensive biosecurity to prevent unauthorized possession, loss, theft, misuse, diversion, or intentional release of biological agents and toxins is a shared responsibility at the international level since infectious disease knows no borders.

Biosafety is complementary to biosecurity, and refers to the implementation of laboratory practices and procedures, specific construction features of laboratory facilities, safety equipment, and appropriate occupational health programs when working with potentially infectious microorganisms and other biological hazards. These measures are designed to reduce the exposure of laboratory personnel, the public, agriculture, and the environment to potentially infectious agents and other biological hazards. Laboratory-acquired infections (LAIs) have also started to receive more attention in recent years, in particular with regard to high (biosafety level 3, or BSL-3) and maximum (BSL-4) containment laboratories. LAIs may occur in research labs, clinical labs, or animal facilities, and sometimes it is difficult to determine whether the infection was acquired in the lab or from the community. There is also a strong public health concern related to the LAIs, as an infected laboratory worker may transmit the infectious disease to his colleagues, family, or community at large [1]. Poor personnel training increases the risk of a LAI or other biological accident in the laboratory, and may also contribute to improper pathogen accounting, storage and transportation, which in turn could contribute to the illicit acquisition of biological agents by terrorists or would-be bio-criminals.

#### Introduction

Natural outbreaks of disease could pose significant challenges to global security by undermining national economies, international trade and travel, public health

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Natural  
disease  
outbreak

Unintended  
consequences

Accidents

Negligence

Vandalism  
/ sabotage

Deliberate  
use of BW



# ***BWC Key Facts and Provisions***

- *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC)*
- Opened for signatures in 1972
- Entered into force in 1975
- Depositories: UK, US, FSU
- 15 Articles
- Review Conferences (RevCon) every 5 years
- 163 States Parties plus 13 Signatories

## **Article I**

Never under any circumstances to acquire or retain biological weapons

## **Article II**

To destroy or divert to peaceful purposes biological weapons and associated resources prior to joining

## **Article III**

Not to transfer, or in any way assist, encourage or induce anyone else to acquire or retain biological weapons

## **Article IV**

To take any national measures necessary to implement the provisions of the BWC domestically

## **Article V**

To consult bilaterally and multilaterally to solve any problems with the implementation of the BWC

## **Article VI**

To request the UN Security Council to investigate alleged breaches of the BWC and to comply with its subsequent decisions

## **Article VII**

To assist States which have been exposed to a danger as a result of a violation of the BWC

## **Article X**

To do all of the above in a way that encourages the peaceful uses of biological science and technology



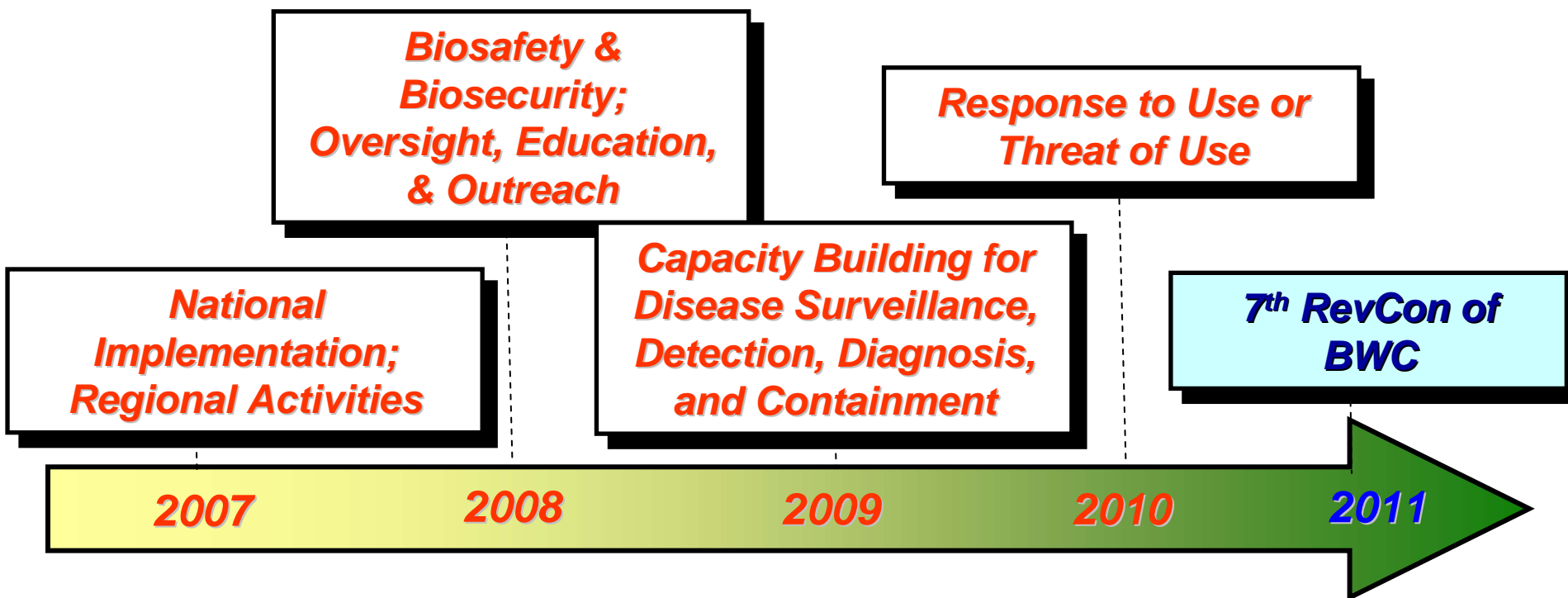
# ***Key Accomplishments at the 6<sup>th</sup> Review Conference of BWC (2007)***

- Created the 2007-2010 intersessional process /Work Program
  - 4 sets of annual meetings prior to the 7th RevCon
  - Each set includes a one week Meeting of Experts, followed by a one week Meeting of States Parties
- Implementation Support Unit (ISU)
- Action plan for universalization
- Improving national implementation
- Improved Confidence Building Measures (CBM) information exchange process
- Enhancing provision of assistance
- Building network of National Points of Contact





CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF  
THE DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCTION AND  
STOCKPILING OF BACTERIOLOGICAL  
(BIOLOGICAL) AND TOXIN WEAPONS  
AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION





# ***National Implementation (2007)***

- States Parties agreed on the value of:
  - Ensuring domestic coordination of implementation efforts
  - Ensuring effective enforcement of legislative and regulatory measures
  - Building capacity to collect evidence and developing early-warning systems
  - Training law enforcement agencies and providing them with adequate scientific and technical support
  - Regional and sub-regional cooperation to support national measures



## ***Regional and Sub-Regional Cooperation: Cooperative Efforts***

- States Parties agreed on the value of regional and sub-regional efforts to:
  - Develop common approaches to implementing the BWC
  - Provide relevant assistance and support
  - Engage regional resources with technical expertise
  - Include discussions of the Convention at regional meetings, including ministerial and high-level consultations





# ***BWC Meetings in 2008***

- National, regional and international measures to improve biosafety and biosecurity, including lab safety and security of pathogens and toxins
- Oversight, education, awareness raising, and adoption and/or development of codes of conduct with the aim of preventing misuse in the context of advances in biological science & technology research with the potential of use for purposes prohibited by BWC





# ***Biosafety & Biosecurity Highlights***

- *Recognizing that biosafety & biosecurity measures contribute to preventing the development, acquisition or use of BW & are appropriate means of implementing the BWC, States agreed on the value of:*
  - o National authorities defining and implementing biosafety & biosecurity concepts in accordance relevant national laws, regulations and policies...
  - o Ensuring measures adopted are practical, sustainable, enforceable, are readily understood and are developed in concert with national stakeholders, **avoid unduly restricting the pursuit of the biological sciences for peaceful purposes**, are adapted for local needs, and appropriate for the agents being handled and the work being undertaken
  - o Building networks between scientific communities and academic institutions and **increasing interaction with professional associations and working groups at the national, regional and international level**



# Codes of Conduct Highlights

*“States Parties recognized the importance of ensuring that those working in the biological sciences are aware of their obligations under the Convention and relevant national legislation and guidelines, have a clear understanding of the content, purpose and foreseeable social, environmental, health and security consequences of their activities, and are encouraged to take an active role in addressing the threats posed by the potential misuse of biological agents and toxins as weapons, including for bioterrorism”.*

*“Having considered codes of conduct, States Parties agreed that such codes can complement national legislative, regulatory and oversight frameworks and help guide science so that it is not misused for prohibited purposes...”*



# ***BWC Meetings in 2009***

- 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



## **Sustainability**

**Integrated approach to human, animal, & plant diseases**

**Coordination of assistance, cooperation, & capacity building**



# ***Dealing with Disease***

- States Parties:
  - Agreed on the value of promoting capacity building for disease surveillance, detection, diagnosis, and containment and improving integration of capacity-building activities to effectively use scarce resources
  - Recognized that the collaboration in the context of BWC will complement activities in other forums
  - Noted the fundamental role of international organizations in efforts to combat disease
- States Parties recognized the importance of building infrastructure:
  - Surveillance systems and capacity for rapid detection/ pathogen identification
  - Primary health care, veterinary, and phytosanitary services
  - Emergency and epidemiological response capabilities
  - Communication capabilities
  - Appropriate national regulatory frameworks





# ***BWC Meetings in 2010: Responding to the Alleged Use of a BW***

- States Parties noted several challenges to provision of assistance & coordination with international organizations:
  - The need for clear procedures for submitting requests for assistance or responding
  - The need for additional resources
  - The interface between international public health response and international security issues
- On investigations and mitigation of potential impact, States Parties recognized the value of:
  - A coordinated government approach
  - Addressing all possible implications
  - Clear channels of communication & command
  - Accessing expert advice
  - Training and exercises







# ***Responding to the Alleged Use of a Biological Weapon***

- States Parties recognized that:
  - They bear primary responsibility for providing assistance and coordination with relevant organizations in the event of an alleged use
  - There is a need to improve their own capacities in surveillance and detection efforts for identifying and confirming outbreaks
  - There is value in improving coordination between law enforcement and health sectors



*The Southern Caucasus Workshop and  
Tabletop Exercise on Public Health,  
Security, and Law Enforcement Partnership  
in Bio-Incident Pre-Planning and Response,  
Tbilisi, Georgia, 11-12 May 2010*

<http://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/international/Pages/southerncaucasus.aspx>



# Moving forward

- The Seventh Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention will be held in Geneva from 5 to 22 December 2011
  - States Parties will undertake a thoroughly and comprehensively
    - Review of the understandings reached during the 2007-2010 Work Program (and decide how the next one will look like)
    - Review of all articles of the Convention
- And
- Agree on a declaration setting out our shared vision of the Convention and its implementation

## Common Understandings Identified during the 2007 to 2010 Intersessional Process of the Biological Weapons Convention

### National Implementation

In accordance with the decision of the Sixth Review Conference in 2007 States Parties discussed, and promoted common understanding and effective action on “ways and means to enhance national implementation, including enforcement of national legislation, strengthening of national institutions and coordination among national law enforcement institutions”.<sup>1</sup>

The Report of the 2007 Meeting of States Parties records:

“19. Having considered ways and means to enhance national implementation of the Convention, and recognising the need to take into account their respective national circumstances and legal and constitutional processes, the States Parties agreed on the fundamental importance of effective national measures in implementing the obligations of the Convention. The States Parties further agreed on the need to nationally manage, coordinate, enforce and regularly review the operation of these measures to ensure their effectiveness. It was recognised that full implementation of all the provisions of the Convention should facilitate economic and technological development and international cooperation in the field of peaceful biological activities.

20. The States Parties recognised the value of ensuring that national implementation measures:

- penalize and prevent activities that breach any of the prohibitions of the Convention, and are sufficient for prosecuting prohibited activities;
- prohibit assisting, encouraging or inducing others to breach any of the prohibitions of the Convention;
- are not limited to enacting relevant laws, but also strengthen their national capacities, including the development of necessary human and technological resources;
- include an effective system of export/import controls, adapted to national circumstances and regulatory systems;
- avoid hampering the economic and technological development of States Parties, or international cooperation in the field of peaceful uses of biological science and technology.

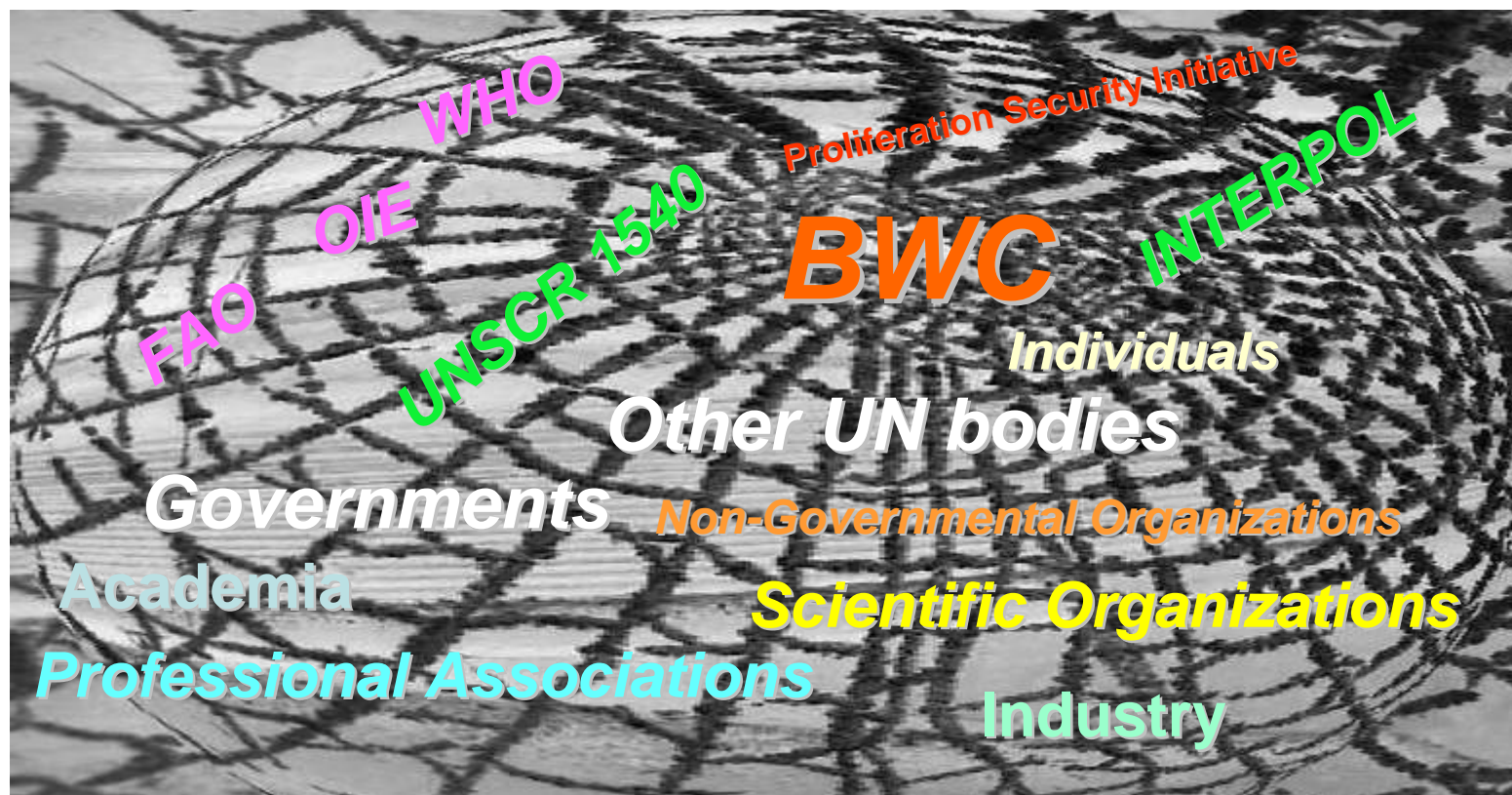
21. Recognising the importance of developing a coordinated and harmonised domestic mechanism to implement the obligations of the Convention, the States Parties agreed on the value of moving from adjacency to synergy, with their governments taking the lead by promoting cooperation and coordination among domestic agencies; of

<sup>1</sup> BWC/CONF.VI/6 Official documents of the BWC can be found online at: <http://www.unog.ch/bwc/docs>

For more details on the 2007-2010 Work Program and up-to-date information and documentation see the BWC ISU website at: <http://www.unog.ch/bwc>



# **BWC:** ***part of the “web of prevention”***



***“We must look [at the BWC] as part of an interlinked array of tools, designed to deal with an interlinked array of problems”- Kofi Annan, 2006***

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