# 9. Reducing security threats from chemical and biological materials

## Overview

*At the international, national and regional levels in 2011 states continued to develop strategies to prevent and remediate the effects of the possible misuse of toxic chemical and biological materials.*

*The Seventh Review Conference of the States Parties to the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) agreed to conduct a third intersessional meeting process that will 'discuss, and promote common understanding and effective action' on cooperation and assistance, the review of relevant developments in science and technology, and the strengthening of, among other things, national implementation of the convention. Despite the expectations of many states and analysts that the BTWC would somehow be 'bolstered' (e.g. by taking additional steps with respect to institutional strengthening and various operational-level or 'practical' measures), the political conditions at the conference inhibited taking decisions to establish an intersessional process that is more 'action-' and decision-oriented. Thus, the regime is evolving incrementally and is focused on process (see section I in this chapter).*

*The 16th Conference of the States Parties to the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) witnessed exchanges between Iran and the United States that partly reflected wider international tension regarding the nature and purpose of Iran's nuclear activities (see section II). Russia and the USA confirmed that they would be unable to complete the destruction of their chemical weapon stockpiles by the final CWC-mandated deadline of 29 April 2012 but would nevertheless undertake to complete the destruction expeditiously. In the case of Iraq, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) concluded that progress has been made in razing chemical weapon production facilities. An advisory panel to the OPCW's Director-General submitted its final report after reviewing the implementation of the CWC with a focus on how the convention's activities should be structured after the destruction of chemical weapon stockpiles ends, sometime after 2012. The Director-General, together with the states parties and the OPCW Executive Council, used the process of formulating the report as a means to develop agreed policy guidance for future OPCW priorities and programmes in the lead-up to the Third CWC Review Conference, which will be held in 2013. The report therefore presented options and activities that had been subjected to political and technical review, which the Director-General may use to inform the balance and focus of future activities by the OPCW Technical Secretariat. The report also reflects the CWC regime's continuing transition towards other*

*priorities that will become more apparent once chemical weapon stockpiles are eliminated.*

*During the Libyan civil war concern was expressed that the regime of Muammar Gaddafi would employ a stock of residual sulphur mustard against anti-government protestors and armed rebel groups. Similar concerns were expressed regarding the nature and fate of possible chemical and biological weapons in Syria over the course of the country's civil unrest and tension (see section III). The OPCW sent a special inspection team to Libya in November to investigate reports of undeclared chemical weapons and it was confirmed that the Gaddafi regime had not declared a secret chemical weapon stockpile. The fact that the OPCW did not uncover Libya's deceptive declarations prior to the 2011 overthrow of Gaddafi raised questions about the organization's ability to detect violations more generally and prompted calls to review the CWC's verification regime, although little discussion occurred on how to link this problem to the convention's challenge inspection request provisions.*

*Science and technology and related research can strongly affect chemical and biological warfare prevention, response and remediation efforts (see section IV). Research on avian influenza in particular has raised a number of policy implications, such as whether it is preferable to describe scientific research on its merits for peaceful purposes and to avoid characterizing it in terms of potential security threats. The debate also affects research funding, publication policies (e.g. lack of common international standards), agreed principles in research oversight and differences in approach on agreeing and implementing appropriate safety and security standards.*

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