SAVE THE DATE

SIDE EVENT
AT THE NINTH REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS
CONVENTION
Geneva, 9 December 2022 at 13:15 (Room XXIII, Palais des Nations, hybrid)

BIOTERRORISM

Panellists:
- Dr Robin Geiss, Director of the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR);
- Dr Michael Ryan, Executive Director, WHO Health Emergencies Programme;
- Ms Paola Albrito, Director of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR): Hazards – Lessons learned from the Sendai Framework;
- Prof Dr Vasilka Sancin, Head of the Department of International Law and Director of the Institute for International Law and International Relations at University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Law (Slovenia);
- Dr Holger Ciglasch, Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community of the Federal Republic of Germany: Support association CBRN.

Light lunch will be served at the beginning of the event.
CONCEPT NOTE

There is no commonly accepted definition of bioterrorism. It is assumed to involve the threat or use of biological agents by individuals or groups motivated by political, religious, ecological, or other ideological objectives. It is also considered as the intentional release or dissemination of viruses, bacteria, fungi, toxins, or other harmful organisms to cause illness or kill people, animals, or plants. Biological agents are typically found in nature and can be disseminated through the air, water, insect vectors, direct contact, or in food. They can also be altered or genetically modified or even synthesised to increase their ability to cause disease, make them resistant to existing medicines, or to increase their capacity to be spread into the environment.

Trends related to technological advances, especially in biotechnology and now notably synthetic biology, and their concomitant increasing attractiveness to terrorists, demand that additional attention be devoted to efforts to detect, prevent, and mitigate a wide spectrum of potential risks to countries' security. This also requires the EU to enhance its resilience and improve its preparedness to deal with the threat of bioterrorism in years ahead.

International framework:
- Hague Convention on land warfare;
- 1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare;
- Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction (BWC);
- Resolution 1540 (2004);
- European Security Strategy;
- EU 2005 Counter-Terrorism Strategy;
- Communication from the EU Commission of 2003 to the Council and the European Parliament on cooperation in the European Union on preparedness and response to Biological and Chemical agent attacks (Health security);
- EU Dual-use Regulation;
- Directive (EU) 2017/541 on combating terrorism;
- Action Plan to enhance preparedness against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) security risks (October 2017);
- Decision No. 7/13 – Update of the OSCE Principles Governing Non-Proliferation.

Challenges:
- Biosecurity/biosafety policy (could gain more nuance and credibility by adopting more sophisticated notions about the challenges inherent in conducting and replicating advanced research);
- Importance of threat mitigation measures (preparedness for the eventuality of a bioterrorism attack, irrespective of its source):
  - Better coordination among organisations involved in mitigation measures;
  - Better exchange of information;
  - Enhancing public health: increased clinical knowledge for identifying infectious diseases that have not occurred for decades, and of emerging ones, diagnostics;
  - Generic antimicrobial therapeutics and therapeutics to overcome drug resistance;
  - Detection and identification methods, and protection (e.g. vaccines, materials);
  - Surveillance;
  - R&D with special focus on biological threats (DURC – Dual Use Research of Concern)
  - Training and education (enhance society's ability to combat outbreaks of 'regular' infectious diseases and mitigate the effects of bioterrorism);
- Strengthening health security systems (national, EU and global).

The event will be moderated by Irina Goršič, Minister Plenipotentiary at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Slovenia in Geneva.