Concept Note

Efforts to Strengthen BWC Implementation in the ASEAN region

The BWC has established strong norms against biological weapons and remains a key element of the international community’s efforts to prevent WMD proliferation. Such roles of the Convention have never been more crucial as the international community faces significant challenges ranging from rapid developments in science and technology related to the Convention and potential threats to biosafety and biosecurity, to the impacts brought about not least by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is against this background to organize this side event that shares experiences in efforts to strengthen the implementation of the Convention across the ASEAN region.

ASEAN is committed to regionalism and multilateralism as important principles and frameworks for international cooperation. The strength of the multilateral system rests on strong regional capacities, while multilateral structures create conditions for regionalism to thrive. It is therefore important to link work being done at the multilateral level with regional efforts.

In their 2022 Joint Communique, the Foreign Ministers of the Association on Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) noted the 50th anniversary of the signing of the BWC, reaffirmed their commitment to this landmark treaty, and reiterated its importance in the context of strengthening common regional challenges in a strategic and holistic manner in the area of nonproliferation and disarmament. This commitment is an important component of ASEAN’s vision for a rules-based, people-oriented, and people-centered ASEAN Political-Security Community.

Japan has been firmly supporting such regional efforts of ASEAN. Japan has, in 2017, contributed approximately 900,000USD to the ISU and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs to strengthen the capacity of BWC National Contact Points (NCPs), build capacities to prepare for and respond to the deliberate use of biological weapons, and improve the preparedness of the UN to investigate allegations of the use of chemical, biological and toxin weapons. Since 2018, a series of workshops/seminars have been implemented to support the efforts made by ASEAN countries; the last and concluding workshops were implemented in March 2022, and these will be introduced in this side event.
ASEAN works among themselves and with their Dialogue Partners, including Japan, in the region and beyond to strengthen national, regional, and international capacities to fully implement the BWC. Throughout the review process, ASEAN has undertaken regional cooperation on enhancing Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) response capacities, including compliance with the BWC. The side event will showcase such cooperation in the following areas:

**Enhancing national capacities to comply with BWC**

- Designing and delivering Confidence-Building Measure (CBM) technical support through intra-regional cooperation in the ASEAN region.
- Strengthening the capacity of BWC National Contact Points in Southeast Asia, including in the utilization of the U.N. Secretary-General’s Mechanism (UNSGM)

**Enhancing national and regional response capacities**

1. Strengthening national, sub-regional, and international capacities to prepare for and respond to the deliberate use of biological weapons.
2. Enhancing response capabilities to CBRN incidents through table-top exercises.

**ORGANIZERS**

This side event is organized by Japan, the Lao PDR, and the Philippines.