

Global experts discuss biological security endeavours

The Biological Security Research Centre (BSRC) at London Metropolitan University hosted a small sized half day hybrid workshop on 28 April 2023. This workshop brought together experts from civil society and international organisations to have an informal brainstorm after the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) 9th Review Conference of December 2022 and the start of new venture for the BTWC and civil society.

The workshop started by the welcome from Dr Hannah Hannah Brock Womack from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) and the introduction from Professor Lijun Shang, the founding director of the Biological Security Research Centre at London Metropolitan University.

Mr Daniel Feakes, Chief, BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) within the Geneva Branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs introduced the organisation of the new BWC Intersessional Programmes (ISP) and what the next ISP might look like, and how Non-Governmental Organisations will be involved. Mr Richard Guthrie, from the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP), UK shared his personal experiences and views he had at the 9th Review Conference and the March Meeting on the ISP.

Then Mr. Tancredi Francese, Acting Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament Geneva and Dr Filippa Lentzos discussed their recent paper on the Review Conference and the upcoming ISP in general. This was followed by Dr Jamie Revill, the Head of the WMD and Space Security Programmes at United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) exclusively explained how the new Science and Technology Review System could be integrated into the BWC meetings given the range of topics that are to be covered, and how Science and Technology might be handled in the next ISP.

In the end, Dr Tom Hobson from Centre for the Study of Existential Risk (CSER) Cambridge University shared the recent Post Review Conference held by CSER and future networking in the UK. Professor Malcolm Dando, a visiting professor, and an associated member of BSRC introduced the development of a recent biological security education book co-edited with Professor Lijun Shang.

Through these presentations, the workshop particularly reviewed the first meeting under the radical new Intersessional Process (ISP) held in March 2023 and how civil society can contribute to this new ISP in the light of the experiences in the earlier Inter Sessional Processes (ISPs). Some best applicable approaches to enhance communication between academic and diplomats are also warmly discussed.

All attendants agreed that this kind of dedicated workshop should be encouraged to help civil society expertise to contribute to the future development of the BWC.

The workshop was funded a grant awarded to Professor Lijun Shang by JRCT. Any enquiry please contact Professor Lijun Shang on l.shang@londonmet.ac.uk