



**Statement of Pax Christi International**  
**to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention Meeting of States Parties**  
**9-13 December 2013, Geneva**

Madam Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you during your Meeting of States Parties to strengthen the norm against misuse of the life sciences for hostile purposes. Pax Christi International is a Catholic Peace Movement inspired by Catholic Social Teaching. We strongly believe that the body of international law and international humanitarian law is essential for promoting global peace, justice and integrity of creation. The BTWC is an integral part of this legal framework that should contribute to human security and respect for human rights while avoiding imposition of unnecessary or duplicate regulatory burdens. We wish to make some concrete proposals of direct relevance to this Meeting. First, we wish to thank you Madam Chair for your extensive synthesis report that you sent to the States Parties on 28 October.<sup>1</sup> We recognise several of our points in your list and will not repeat them now. Pax Christi International urges that your comprehensive report will be integrated into the report of this Meeting.

**Developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention**

The particular topic to be considered in 2013 under the Standing Agenda item on Science and Technology is "advances in technologies for surveillance, detection, diagnosis and mitigation of infectious diseases, and similar occurrences caused by toxins in humans, animals and plants". Pax Christi International is pleased about the prominent role given to discussions on scientific and technological developments related to the Convention, and supports the Chair's call to bring in more voices by continuing efforts to engage the scientific community, academia, industry and relevant NGO's. In particular, the publication on the BTWC website of information on relevant developments in science and technology by the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) helps to raise awareness of developments of concern and developments that support implementation of the Convention. This could be a step in the direction of creating an observatory on

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[http://unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/\(httpAssets\)/2414EE7B577A8012C1257C1300389A9F/\\$file/Chairman+letter+to+SPs+October+2013+\(with+attachments\).pdf](http://unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/2414EE7B577A8012C1257C1300389A9F/$file/Chairman+letter+to+SPs+October+2013+(with+attachments).pdf)

developments in science and technology of relevance to the Convention we proposed during the Meeting of Experts to the BTWC last August<sup>2</sup>.

### **Cooperation and assistance**

However, it is important to move towards a broader dialogue including non-expert civil society on the main purpose of the Convention: to contribute to protecting citizens across the globe and the natural environment. We recommend that consideration be given at your Meetings in 2014 to the currently on-going work by the UNESCO Executive Board on revision of the Declaration on the Status of Scientific Researchers (1974) following the study carried out by the World Commission on Ethics of Science and Technology (COMEST)<sup>3</sup>. The May 2013 COMEST report notes that "Areas of science that have potential "dual use" – i.e. leading to new technologies or information with potential for both benevolent and malevolent applications – have gained considerably in significance since 1974, raising more intensely the issue of how researchers approach these problems." It goes on to observe that "The emergence of unpredictable and uncertain, but possibly catastrophic, risks has stimulated the development of precautionary approaches that were little recognized in 1974." The Executive Board of UNESCO at its 192nd Session in September/October 2013 decided that the 37th UNESCO General Conference in November 2013 should consider the revision of the 1974 Recommendation on the Status of Scientific Workers<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, at the UNESCO General Conference in November 2013 it was noted<sup>5</sup> that "The rationale of the 1974 Recommendation [...] is that the general ethical principles that apply to science need to be embedded in concrete institutional arrangements. [...] However, whether the details of the institutional template assumed in the 1974 Recommendation remain relevant is open to question. Current modes of scientific organization are different, and subject researchers to different kinds of pressures than were envisaged in 1974." It is recommended that UNESCO be invited to participate at the Meeting of Experts in 2014 to provide a briefing on this on-going activity as this has direct relevance to the ethics of the life sciences.

### **Strengthening national implementation**

One of the solutions considered by COMEST is organising public consultation on controversial research, such as dual use life sciences. Such public consultations are ideally organised on a national or local level. This is an idea that is widely supported by the public, at least in Europe. According to a recent Eurobarometer study on responsible research and innovation published by the European Commission<sup>6</sup>, 55% of Europeans

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<sup>2</sup> <http://paxchristi.net/sites/default/files/documents/2013-0310-en-gl-sd.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> C.f. item 9.3 on the provisional agenda of UNESCO's General Conference:  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002223/222361e.pdf> / [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=13131&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13131&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO Executive Board Decision 10 at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002238/223810e.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002228/222891e.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb\\_special\\_419\\_400\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_special_419_400_en.htm)

wants to be involved in such public dialogue. Even though 77% thinks that science and technology in general offer benefits to society, 77% is concerned about potential misuse by terrorists in the future. Pax Christi International recommends broadening communication and dialogue about the BTWC and other biosecurity regulations and initiatives to a wider audience than just policy makers and the scientific and industrial life science communities. This should not only foster public understanding of national obligations, but also widen the scope of deliberations. This should contribute to more societally relevant biosecurity regulations and a stronger public support for peaceful life sciences development.

### **How to enable fuller participation in the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)**

Pax Christi International calls for more commitment by the State Parties of the BTWC in participating in, submitting and developing the CBMs. This is a key tool for the Convention! The CBMs are very important as a trust building measure that should not be underestimated. Furthermore, having undeclared facilities represents a major risk. States Parties should take care that there is consistency between CBMs or official sources and information published on the internet. The CBMs are a cornerstone in the trust building efforts, as a part of the web of prevention, and as part of the global effort to fight against the misuse of life sciences.

We would like to remind the Meeting of States Parties that 2013 is the second and final year of the CBMs agenda item: therefore we recommend that they should agree some means of ensuring continuing attention to CBMs after 2013. Otherwise there will be an unfortunate gap until the subject is picked up again at the Eighth Review Conference in 2016. We suggest, for example, that the topic of CBMs might be allocated to one of the Vice-Chairmen, who would be tasked with reporting on CBM progress to the Meeting of States Parties (MSP) 2014 and MSP 2015, in much the same way as a report is given each year on progress in universalization. It would be even better if the Meeting of States Parties 2013 could decide that space be made in the second half of the intersessional programme (2014 and 2015) for preparatory work aimed at making the substantive discussion of the future of CBMs more productive at the Eighth Review Conference in 2016. For example, an Ad Hoc Group of Experts (as in 1987 when such a group followed the Second Review Conference) could concentrate on the future of CBMs if appointed by MSP 2013 to work through 2014 and 2015 and submit a report with specific proposals for consideration at the Eighth Review Conference. It is also vital that the ISU has sufficient resources to be able to track and study the reports.

Thank you for your attention. Pax Christi International wishes you all fruitful discussions and a successful Meeting of States Parties.

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