

**Fourth Meeting
Geneva, 10-14 December 2007**

**Meeting of Experts
Geneva, 20-24 August 2007**

Items 5 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of ways and means to enhance
national implementation, including enforcement
of national legislation, strengthening of
national institutions and coordination among
national law enforcement institutions**

**NATIONAL DATA COLLECTION PROCESSES FOR CBM
SUBMISSIONS**

Submitted by Switzerland

1. The BTWC Sixth Review Conference agreed that implementation of the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) merits further and comprehensive attention at the Seventh Review Conference in 2011. As a contribution to efforts to facilitate this substantive review, Switzerland has initiated a preliminary study on national data collection processes for CBM submissions. This Working Paper outlines the study's aims and presents some of its initial findings.

Background

2. The CBM information exchange process is an important transparency measure for the BTWC and can provide States Parties with useful information concerning compliance with the Convention.

3. There are various ongoing efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the CBM mechanism. These have generally tended to focus on strengthening the role of the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (ODA) in facilitating, collecting and distributing the submissions among States Parties; on the suitability of the information requested; and on redesigning the existing forms and moving towards an electronic information management system. Addressing these issues will improve States Parties' ability to provide information on their compliance with the Convention. However, little attention has been paid to understanding States Parties' national processes of collating data for CBM submissions.

Why focus on national data collection processes for CBM submissions?

4. There are a number of shortcomings in the implementation of the CBM mechanism. Chief among these are lack of participation and inconsistent participation. A key research priority leading up to the 2011 discussion should be to empirically explore what impediments the relevant States Parties face in submitting their CBMs.
5. Another central concern in the implementation of the CBM mechanism relates to the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the data submitted. To improve the quality of the data submitted it is fundamentally important to understand the particular challenges and needs arising in different national contexts and how this impacts on CBM submissions.
6. Switzerland has initiated a preliminary study on national data collection processes for CBM submissions in order to draw out the experience and perspectives of those tasked with preparing the CBM return and to provide concrete examples of problems and solutions, of models, and of lessons learned in the submission process. It is hoped that the results of the study will be constructive not only for States Parties submitting CBMs for the first time, but also for States that have consistently been submitting them for some time and to which a procedural review might be helpful.

Design of study

7. The study sampled a small number (10) of States Parties that have consistently submitted returns since the CBM mechanism was agreed in 1986. The sample was selected on the basis of representation from the Eastern Group, the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States (NAM), and the Western Group. To the extent practically possible, the sample was also selected to increase variation in political systems, socio-economic indicators, population size, and geography of the States represented.
8. The study principally relied on interviews and written questionnaires. The type of questions asked were:
 - (i) When is the data collection process initiated?
 - (ii) Who is contacted for information? How are they identified? How are they contacted?
 - (iii) How many people are involved, and how much time is spent in total?
 - (iv) What difficulties, if any, have been encountered during the process?
 - (v) What lessons have been learned over the years regarding which processes work and do not work so well?
 - (vi) What advice could be given to help governments beginning this process for the first time?

Participants in the study were assured that any information provided relating to themselves or other individuals would be treated strictly in confidence and that every effort would be taken to ensure national data is anonymised in any published work.

Initial findings

9. The study found that while the national contact points designated by States Parties tend to be located in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the technical expertise required to complete the CBM forms is generally located outside the MFA. While in some States the MFA draws on this expertise as and when the need arises, other States outsource the entire information collation process to separate agencies, such as ministries of defence, industry or science and technology.

10. There is significant variation in the amount of time the data collation process takes between States as well as across different years for each State. The process generally took between two to three months for all States in the sample. The aggregate time the officials compiling the CBM submission spent collecting the information ranged from 2-3 days to 14-21 days, depending on the amount of data and number of agencies contacted during the process. In addition, officials in institutions which respond to requests for CBM-relevant information and national experts who advise the information collator also spend time on the CBM process. Once information collation routines are established, the process generally takes less time. However, as one participant noted, CBM data collection is “a living process, not a routine exercise”, and in years when the process is reviewed a great deal more time and resources are required.

11. Most collators typically have a list of institutions they contact annually for information. In the sample, the number of institutions contacted ranged from 4 to 35, with most States contacting between 5 and 10 institutions. The collator usually sends an initial letter to the institution explaining the CBM process and requesting the provision of specific information. Some States use standardised letters and send out all of the CBM forms to all institutions; others adopt a more targeted approach and tailor each letter to the individual institution and include only the forms for which the institution is expected to provide information.

12. One State in the sample had enacted legislation to require the provision of information for the CBM mechanism. A number of collators expressed a wish for this legal authority as some institutions did not consider that they were obliged to provide this information, were constrained from providing it without a legal mandate, or did not have the resources to provide such information on a voluntary basis, at least not within the given timeframe. Similarly, some explained that information collected for local, regional or state purposes could not be provided for federal purposes without a legal mandate and that such a mandate would also facilitate the collection of relevant information from industry. Other collators provided different points of view: some had not experienced difficulties in obtaining the appropriate information, and some considered that the politically-binding nature of the CBM mechanism precluded the need for national legislation.

13. Once the appropriate information has been collated, a review of the collective data is generally carried out by the collator or a broader group. In most States, this review is to ensure comprehensiveness and accuracy of data, and to ensure the current information is in line with that provided in previous years. In some States, the review is also carried out for security purposes. Most States, however, ensure that contributing institutions are aware that the

information they provide is suitable for dissemination to other States Parties. None of the States sampled had processes in place for reviewing the collective data for commercially sensitive or proprietary information.

Forthcoming study report

14. A comprehensive report on this study will be published in advance of the BTWC Meeting of States Parties in December 2007. This report will provide detailed analysis of the study findings, including certain challenges in CBM data collation and lessons learned through participation in the CBM mechanism.

15. Switzerland wishes to thank those officials who generously gave their time in participating in the study, as well as the researchers, Dr Filippa Lentzos (London School of Economics) and Angela Woodward (VERTIC).
