



Intervention by the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

The Second Meeting of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), 7-18 August 2023, Palais des Nations in Geneva

National Inventory of Dangerous Pathogens (NIDP)

Thank you Mr. Chair,

I take this opportunity to brief on the background of the establishment of National Inventory of Dangerous Pathogens (NIDP) in Sri Lanka which is a key step in national implementation of the BWC. Following the Joint External Evaluation of International Health Regulations (IHR) implementation in 2017, while acknowledging the several activities that were undertaken to improve the biosafety and biosecurity in Sri Lanka, it was recommended to develop a National Inventory of Dangerous Pathogens and Toxins (NIDP) as well to further strengthen the biosafety and biosecurity in the country.

Thus, action was undertaken to develop the National Policy on Biosafety and Biosecurity, including policy statements required to satisfy the 15 Articles of the BWC; appointing two contact points including the National Coordinator, Disaster Preparedness and Response of the Ministry of Health. The Disaster Preparedness and Response Division (DPRD) of the Ministry of Health applied for extended assistance from the UNODA for implementation activities of BWC and BWC-ISU in collaboration with the National Institute of Public Health and the Environment (RVIM), of the Netherlands supported Sri Lanka to develop the NIDP. We are grateful to the Government of the Netherlands and UNODA for this assistance and the European Union (EU) for funding the project.

It was a pleasure to observe that this forum referred to the establishment of National Inventory of Dangerous Pathogens (NIDP) in Sri Lanka which was developed with support from UNODA and the Netherlands in 2022 and funded by the European Union (EU) under EU Council Decision 2019/97.

First, an introductory online training programme on “Multi sectoral stakeholder platforms and best practices” was conducted by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in December 2021. Then, a Working Group for development of the NIDP was appointed by the Secretary, Ministry of Health with multi sectoral representation. This working group to date is the body that is actively working in the process of the implementation of the NIDP in Sri Lanka.

The first virtual workshop on the NIDP was held on 12th May 2022 with the participation of representatives from the relevant stakeholders. Following several working group meetings, A comprehensive list of laboratories across the country from all sectors was formulated; and the operational definition of dangerous pathogens for NIDP was finalized. The list of dangerous pathogens and toxins for Sri Lanka was finalized, based on pathogens and toxins identified in the list of Dangerous Pathogens and Toxins of the US Department of Health and Human Services (Select agents list), ‘Dual use’ list of the EU and the Australia group list.

Following the Second in-person workshop held from 9th-11th August 2022 in UNESCAP, Bangkok, Thailand, several activities required for the implementation of NIDP were discussed. Following the 3rd in-person meeting held on 17th - 18th November 2022, in Sri Lanka, the software for NIDP was handed over to Sri Lanka by RVIM, Netherlands and the relevant stakeholders were informed of the country’s progress and future plans on implementing the NIDP.

The relevant software has been installed and secured at the Ministry of Health, and the communication plan and the process of data sharing have been finalized. Data security measures have also been undertaken. Sri Lanka is planning on conducting a pilot study within 10 laboratories representing the relevant stakeholders, at different parts of the country. Following the evaluation of the pilot study, the aim is to implement the NIDP into all laboratories across all sectors, across the island.

Mr. Chair,

It is obvious that Cooperation with the UN and other International Organizations and Member States significantly enhances the process of national implementation of BWC. Sri Lanka reaffirms its continued commitment in carrying forward the activities related to BWC national implementation in collaboration with all national as well as international stakeholders.

Thank you