



United Nations

Press Conference

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

PRESS CONFERENCE ON WORK OF SECURITY COUNCIL 1540 COMMITTEE

Terrorist networks were mushrooming and would not hesitate to use even the most dangerous weapons if they acquired them, putting the community of nations in a race against time, Peter Burian (Slovakia), Chairman of the Security Council's 1540 Committee, said today at a Headquarters press conference.

Briefing on the work of the Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), he said the resolution called on States to prevent access by non-State actors to weapons of mass destruction, and imposed binding obligations on all States to establish domestic controls to prevent the proliferation of such weapons and their means of delivery, including by establishing controls over related materials and adopting legislative measures.

[The Security Council adopted resolution 1540 unanimously on 28 April 2004 under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. On 27 April 2006, it extended the 1540 Committee's mandate for two years by adopting resolution 1673 (2006), which reiterated the objectives of resolution 1540 (2004) and called on the Committee to intensify its efforts to promote its full implementation.]

Mr. Burian was joined today by Richard Cupitt, Assistance Coordinator of the Committee Experts, and Elizabeth Turpen, Senior Associate at the Henry Stimson Center. They provided an update on the first meeting, held yesterday, with potential donor countries and international organizations on providing and coordinating assistance for implementation of the resolution.

Additionally, the panel briefed on the first meeting, this morning, between the 1540 Committee and a select group of non-governmental organizations, including: the Center for International Trade and Security (CITS), University of Georgia, Athens/Washington, D.C.; Center for Non-proliferation Studies (CNS), Monterey Institute of International Studies, Monterey/Washington, D.C.; Council for Security Cooperation for the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), Honolulu/Washington, D.C.; Stimson Center; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI); and the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC), London.

Mr. Burian said the two days of meetings were aimed at helping countries with insufficient capacities face the difficulties of dealing with the threat on a national basis. It had been agreed that donor countries were important players in that respect, and there had been an opportunity to hear from non-governmental organizations today, specifically about their role

in providing concrete legislative advice.

Describing the Stimson Center as a relatively small public policy “think tank” in Washington, D. C., that had launched an initiative on sustainable implementation of resolution 1540 (2004), Ms. Turpen said today’s meeting had been “an incredible opportunity” to present the skills that non-governmental organizations brought to the table in facilitating implementation of the resolution. The mandate was burdensome, but the Committee had formally recognized the organizations’ role, their flexibility, responsiveness and, in some cases, technical assistance capacity to fill the gaps in efforts to implement the resolution.

Given the convergence of trends in terms of the rise of non-State actors and the diffusion of technology, resolution 1540 (2004) was an important opportunity for the international community, she said. The resolution had the only encompassing mandate that sought to “get our arms around that convergence of threats and trends”. As such, it required unprecedented collaboration between international organizations, States, regional entities and non-governmental organizations.

Mr. Burian added that the Committee wished to move from a focus on increasing awareness of the resolution to its full implementation, which would require an individual or subregional approach in dealing with the various regional challenges. There were still 56 countries that had not submitted a first report, and they needed assistance. However, reporting was only a first step. The concentration now was on full implementation of 1540 (2004), for which a more inventive approach was needed in helping countries build sufficient administrative, technical and expert capacities to deal with the priorities of preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Cupitt stressed that every State faced challenges in implementing its obligations under resolution 1540 (2004), but it was a particular problem for those lacking capacity. Several States and organizations were interested in offering assistance, but matching those with States in need had been difficult. The Committee had been trying for the past two days to identify how it could better facilitate the available assistance efforts. The idea was to develop a dialogue between the Committee, the States offering assistance and those requesting it.

Responding to questions, Mr. Burian said most of the 56 countries that had not yet reported to the Committee were from the Caribbean, African and Pacific regions. The Committee would organize several workshops to discuss their assistance needs. Only international cooperation and interaction among States could ensure a stable system of prevention and protection against proliferation. Among the concrete challenges, which differed from country to country, were border control, physical protection of materials related to weapons of mass destruction, shipment and transshipment, and the financing of illicit proliferation and related activities.

Mr. Cupitt added that States had taken a broad range of measures to fulfil their obligations under resolution 1540 (2004), covering biological, chemical and nuclear weapons, as well as missiles — the main means of delivery. Measures covering dual-use items ranged from law-enforcement activities to border and export control, to creating fences around plants and limiting access by non-State actors to materials and weapons.

Generally, such measures had been taken mainly in Europe and North America, followed by Asia and Latin America, he said. In Africa, States had taken far fewer steps so far,

which clearly reflected capacity levels and priorities. Each region had some countries that had taken several measures and some countries that had not taken too many. Countries might have taken steps to protect economic development or public health, such as safety procedures for transport of hazardous items, not realizing that they were relevant to resolution 1540 (2004).

He noted in response to another question that the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, which recently entered into force, was an important part of the whole structure of tools and legislative instruments to counter the threat of proliferation. Resolution 1540 (2004) was only a framework for dealing with that threat; all instruments were complementary, adding strength to the resolution and its implementation. In turn, the resolution contributed to implementation of all other related instruments as part of a process of mutually reinforcing efforts now in place.

Asked whether there was an entity for regulating biological weapons, like the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the field of nuclear weapons and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Mr. Cupitt drew attention to a preparatory committee of the Biological Weapons Convention, adding, however, that, despite ideas and concepts, there was presently no equivalent to those bodies in the biological weapons or missile sphere.

Responding to a question about the Global Partnership and the recent Carnegie Conference, Ms. Turpen said the Stimson Center's project was based on lessons learned from the United States Government's activities in the former Soviet States and those of the Global Partnership. Many lessons had been learned from 15 years of United States non-proliferation assistance and Global Partnership initiatives, which the Center felt were a vastly underappreciated and underutilized "tool kit" on which to proceed in implementing resolution 1540 (2004).

She added that built into the Center's approach to resolution 1540 (2004) was an attempt to draw on the development priorities of certain recipient States to align them with non-proliferation assistance.

Responding to a further question, Mr. Burian said that, in recent months, Committee experts had engaged with countries requiring reporting assistance and had prepared an elaborate matrix that might serve as a basis for reporting. Several countries, particularly in the Caribbean and Pacific regions, were nearly ready to submit their reports owing to their interaction with the Committee.

* * * * *

For information media • not an official record