

## **Concept note on the Open Debate on Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction**

At the initiative of Bolivia, the Security Council will hold an open debate tomorrow (28 June) on “the global effort to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors.” It will focus on the implementation of resolution 1540 and the work of the 1540 Committee, which is chaired by Ambassador Sacha Sergio Llorentty Solíz of Bolivia. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and Joseph Ballard, Senior Officer from the Office of Strategy and Policy of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, are expected to brief the Council. Bolivia will also brief in its capacity as chair of the 1540 Committee. At press time, it appeared that some 60 member states, including Council members, are expected to participate in the meeting.

In a concept note circulated last week (and available on the 1540 Committee website), Bolivia outlined as a focus of the debate “how to reinforce the preventive system to avoid the humanitarian, political, economic and environmental catastrophe that could result from the use of a nuclear, chemical and biological weapon by non-state actors, particularly terrorists”, while taking into account resolution 2325 adopted on 15 December 2016. That resolution was adopted at a high-level debate titled “Preventing Catastrophe: A Global Agenda for Stopping the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction by Non-State Actors,” marking the conclusion of the second comprehensive review of the status of implementation of resolution 1540 (S/PV.7837).

Resolution 2325 endorsed the review and noted the findings and recommendations of its final report. It re-emphasised the importance of all states fully and effectively implementing resolution 1540 and its main provisions. These include taking effective measures to establish domestic controls to prevent proliferation; and adopting effective laws which prohibit any non-state actor to manufacture, acquire, possess, develop, transport, transfer or use weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, in particular for terrorist purposes, as well as attempts to engage in any such activities, participate in them as an accomplice, assist or finance them.

According to a concept paper, participants are encouraged to discuss practical and action-oriented measures aimed at preventing non-state actors from acquiring or using weapons of mass destruction, “through sharing experience and ideas” regarding effective implementation, as well as support for capacity building and voluntary financial and in-kind contributions in this regard. They are also invited to share how they take into account the evolving nature of proliferation risks in their implementation efforts.

The meeting tomorrow will be the third open debate on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in less than a year, reflecting heightened international concern about new proliferation risks, in particular by terrorists getting access to such weapons. In addition to the debate in December on the 1540 comprehensive review, the Council held a debate in August 2016 at the initiative of Malaysia (S/PV.7758) on “Challenges in addressing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery, and related materials”, with briefings by the Secretary-General, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, a representative of INTERPOL and an expert on the risks associated with new technological advances. Furthermore, the chair of the 1540 Committee has briefed the Council on two occasions this year: first on 16 March (S/PV.7900) and then on 11 May, in a joint briefing with the chairs of the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) & Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee and the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC).

Many of the issues that were the focus of these recent meetings will most likely be part of the upcoming discussion as well, in particular with regard to the follow-up of the findings of the comprehensive review, such as the need to strengthen cooperation, outreach and assistance; address new threats and challenges; and promote universal reporting by member states on the measures they have taken with regard to implementation. Member states may use the debate as an opportunity to express concern about the growing threat posed by terrorism and non-state actors' use of weapons of mass destruction with a specific reference to the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Participants in the debate may also refer to the 15 June decision by the General Assembly to create a new UN counter-terrorism office (A/RES/71/291), as recommended by the Secretary-General. According to this decision, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Office and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, together with their existing staff and budgetary resources, will move out of the Department of Political Affairs and into the new office. The objective is to enhance coordination and coherence among all of the 38 UN entities involved in counter-terrorism efforts, including the Group of Experts assisting the 1540 Committee.

Another issue that may be raised in tomorrow's discussion, which is also highlighted in the concept note, is the significant implementation gaps in the areas of accounting, securing and export control measures, in particular with regard to securing the production, use, storage and transport of materials related to chemical and biological weapons and with regard to proliferation financing. It is possible that some briefers and member states may advocate enhanced cooperation between the Council and international organisations and stress the importance of continuing to develop a network of national 1540 points of contact.