

Establishment of a National Inventory of Dangerous Pathogens

Sri Lanka has carried out several activities to be in line with the Biological Weapons Convention. One concrete example that I want to share is the Establishment of a National Inventory of Dangerous Pathogens. A written submission has also been submitted to this committee to the conference on the same.

A critical step towards greater global health security and safe and secure practises in biological laboratories is to implement a national oversight system to address the biological risks and mitigation measures associated with handling and storing dangerous pathogens. A 'National Inventory of Dangerous Pathogens' (NIDP) is a feasible, practical, and essential implementation measure in setting up a national oversight and regulatory system.

In line with the EU Council Decision 2019/97, Sri Lanka has requested assistance on the implementation of a National Inventory of Dangerous Pathogens (NIDP) and support regarding biosecurity and dual-use risk assessments and awareness raising activities.

With the generous support of the National Institute of Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) Netherlands, Sri Lanka was able to establish its National Inventory of Dangerous Pathogens. We would like to place in note with gratitude that in addition to Sri Lanka, RIVM has cooperated with several countries in East Africa in implementing such a national inventory.

In May 2022, the first virtual consultation workshop took place between experts from the Netherlands Biosecurity Office at RIVM and different Sri Lankan experts from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of the Environment, Department of Animal Production and Health, Department of Customs, Attorney General's Department, the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Defense, and academia, among others. During this workshop, the needs of Sri Lanka were presented, and the contours of the assistance workshops were defined.

The implementation of a NIDP consists of four stages: 1) the identification phase; 2) the preparatory phase; 3) the implementation phase; and 4) the maintenance and evaluation phase.

An in-person workshop was in Thailand on August 8-10, 2022. held for the identification and the preparation phases of the implementation of NIDP, where 16 experts from Sri Lanka participated in. A National Action Holder was identified that would be responsible for the implementation and hosting of a NIDP. In addition, a communication plan was designed, relevant stakeholders such as universities, research institutes etc were identified, and an initial list of high-risk pathogens to be considered was drafted.

The third and last workshop that was held on November 17-18, 2022, in Sri Lanka, centred on the final two stages of NIDP implementation, namely the implementation and maintenance and evaluation phases. During the workshop, an extensive and interactive risk assessment exercise was carried out regarding the electronic database and data gathering process. Illustrating the importance of implementing an NIDP, the final day of the workshop was attended by representatives of relevant stakeholders and high-level governmental officials.

This bilateral collaborative project between Sri Lanka and the Netherlands

is a practical example of assistance and cooperation under Article X of the Convention. In addition, the establishment of an NIDP in Sri Lanka contributes to the national implementation of the Convention as required under Article IV.

On behalf of both countries, we would like to encourage States Parties to develop and implement pathogen repository and inventory systems as a critical step in implementing the BWC.