

Working Group on Biosecurity

Lead academy: Polish Academy of Sciences.

Dual-use research or dual-use technology is defined, in both politics and diplomacy, as that which can be used for either peaceful or military purposes. Consequently, there is a great deal of international interest in monitoring which countries and/or laboratories are involved in dual-use research and its implications for non-peaceful purposes. In 2011, the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAS) was awarded a grant from IAP on 'Education in Biosecurity: Raising Awareness on Dual-use Issues' and has since been taking the lead in these activities within the inter-academy network.

The process of educating and raising awareness among academic and scientific communities on the dual-use dilemma is gaining in importance, especially at the current time when the threat of terrorism is a real danger facing society.

Led by the Polish Academy of Sciences, the IAP Biosecurity Working Group also includes academy representatives from Australia, China, Cuba, Egypt, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. In 2014, PAS continued working on biosecurity and dual-use issues and, through the Biosecurity Working Group, provides IAP with important visibility in the international policy-making arena.

Conference

A conference, 'Dual use of Innovative Technologies', was held in Poznan, Poland, on 16 May 2014. The meeting, attended by 85 participants, including 50 life-science students, was organized under the patronage of Poland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and co-organized by the Polish Academy of Sciences, Poznan University of Economics, the Office of Agricultural Affairs of the American Embassy in Warsaw, the IAP Working Group on Biosecurity, the PAS Committee for Biotechnology and the Institute of Bioorganic Chemistry of the PAS.



Lukasz Różycki, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Poland, speaking at the conference on 'Dual-use of Innovative Technologies', organized by the Polish Academy of Sciences and partners in Poznan, Poland, on 16 May 2014.

Detailed discussions revolved around international legislation procedures related to the potential dual-use of innovative technologies, taking into account such international agreements as the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1540. Subjects discussed included the challenges connected with the use and misuse of new technologies and potential risks to national and international security, as well as the lack of awareness among scientists and the lack of coordination of actions aimed at including 'dual-use education' as a standard part of the training life

scientists receive. Indeed, as proposed by Jo Husbands of the US National Academy of Sciences and a member of the IAP Biosecurity Working Group, a key recommendation from the conference was that: "An introduction to dual-use issues should be a part of the education of every life scientist."

In Geneva

Many of the UN meetings relating to international conventions take place in Geneva, Switzerland. In an effort to raise awareness of dual-use issues among the participants of such meetings, the IAP Biosecurity Working Group participated in a number of events held in the city.

A 'Workshop on Advances in Understanding Pathogenicity' held on 3 August 2014, immediately prior to the Meeting of Experts (MXP) of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), was organized with the aim of directly engaging technical experts involved in the BWC discussions and providing up-to-date scientific information relevant to the ensuing MXP. The workshop, attended by over 30 experts in the field, was dedicated to opportunities and challenges of two complementary issues: (i) strategies for targeting pathogen virulence factors and examples of the modification of the immune response to a pathogen; and (ii) the implications of this research for the Biosecurity Working Group and biosecurity in general.

The MXP of the BWC took place on 4-8 August 2014 and Ryszard Słomski, coordinator of the IAP Biosecurity Working Group, highlighted its activities in the area of awareness-raising of biosecurity issues during the time set aside for statements by non-governmental organizations.

Finally, Jo Husbands attended the Meeting of States Parties in Geneva, 1-5 December 2014. As a representative of the IAP Biosecurity Working Group, she took the opportunity to present the position of IAP. Both statements are available on the website of the UN Office at Geneva (www.unog.ch/bwc).



Andrzej Górski, Polish Academy of Sciences and chair of the IAP Biosecurity Working Group, at the 'Dual-use of Innovative Technologies' conference in Poznan, Poland, 16 May 2014.



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