

UNRCPD hosts webinars to strengthen protections against weapons of mass destruction in South Asia and Mongolia

KATHMANDU, Nepal, 15 December (UNRCPD): Strengthening the national-level implementation of global measures against weapons of mass destruction was the aim of a webinar series hosted in December by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD).

The virtual event equipped government officials in the region with a more detailed understanding of UN Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which requires action by all governments to prevent non-State actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, their components or their means of delivery. Titled “Supporting the Implementation of UNSCR 1540 (2004) in South Asia and Mongolia”, the programme combined a self-paced online course developed by UNODA’s Vienna Office with live webinars that featured expert presentations and group discussions.

The programme ran from 1 to 15 December 2020, reaching more than 50 officials responsible for implementing resolution 1540 in Bangladesh, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal or Sri Lanka. The participants also included 15 international experts from the United Nations, the United States Department of State, the Stimson Center, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Customs Organization (WCO), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the Group of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) (1540 Committee).

Each week, the participants worked through one of three self-paced modules tailored to the course and hosted on UNODA’s [Disarmament Education Dashboard](#). The material in each module was then contextualized in a corresponding live webinar, moderated by Mr. Steven Humphries of UNRCPD, with presentations, question-and-answer segments and open discussions led by industry experts.

The first webinar, held on 1 December, opened with remarks by former Ambassador Margaret Uyehara (United States) and Dr. Yuriy Kryvonos of UNRCPD. Their statements were followed by presentations that provided a general overview of the 1540 regime, including its [subsequent resolutions](#); related economic, security and regulatory benefits; the [2016 Comprehensive Review](#); and prospects for the next comprehensive review, scheduled for 2021. During a question-and-answer exchange that followed, speakers explained that while resolution 1540 is not a sanctions regime and each Member State is separately responsible for enforcing it, governments can access many forms of relevant assistance. Then, in an open discussion that focused largely on strategic trade and risk assessment, a Stimson Center expert noted that the economic benefits of implementing resolution 1540 (2004) include establishing strong regulatory frameworks, promoting transparent trade and reducing transshipment risks.

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Speaking: Kiwako Tanaka

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1540 Co. Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004)

Significance of Resolution 1540

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(a) Develop and maintain appropriate effective measures to account for and control such items in production, use, storage or transport.

(b) Develop and maintain appropriate effective physical protection measures.

(c) Develop and maintain appropriate effective (border controls) and law enforcement efforts to detect, deter, prevent and combat including through international cooperation when necessary, the illicit trafficking and brokering in such items in accordance with their national legal authorities and legislation and consistent with international law.

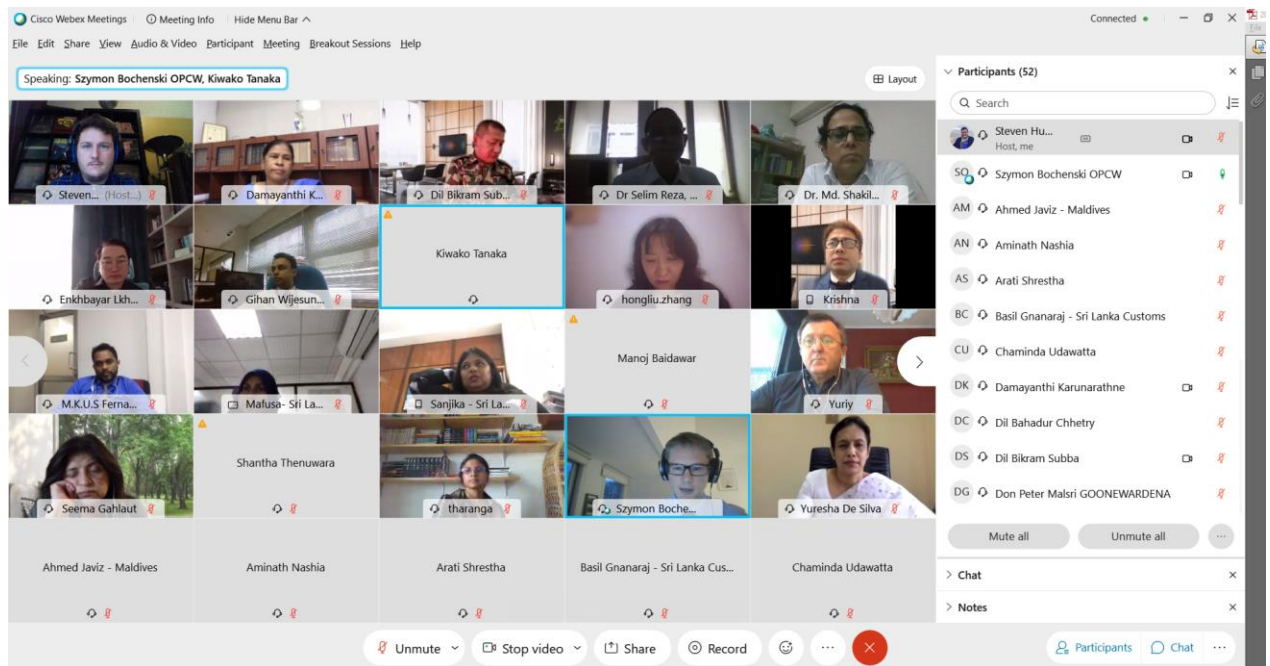
(d) Establish, develop, review and maintain appropriate effective national export and trans-shipment controls over such items, including appropriate laws and regulations to control export, transit, trans-shipment and re-export and controls on providing funds and services related to such export and trans-shipment such as financing, and transporting that would contribute to proliferation, as well as establishing end-user controls; and establishing and enforcing appropriate criminal or civil penalties for violations of such export control laws and regulations.

- Impetus for a great number of States to establish or review their national export control or strategic trade management systems.
- It's **not only about "export"** controls: UNSCR 1540 acknowledges that a number of **related activities** need to be controlled as well (transits, transshipments, brokering, services etc).
- UNSCR 1540 recognizes the utility of **national control lists** and encourages States to **reach out to industry**.
- In summary, UNSCR 1540 identifies **key elements of effective export control systems**:
 - Legislation (incl. penalties for violations)
 - Enforcement capacity
 - Industry-government relations.

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Ms. Kiwako Tanaka of the-1540 Committee's Group of Experts presents an overview of resolution 1540 (2004) during the first webinar of the series.

The second webinar, hosted on 8 December, reviewed how individual Asia-Pacific States can implement the resolution. In opening presentations, UNRCPD and the Stimson Center outlined recommendations for improving national implementation, such as establishing national points of contact and drafting a national implementation action plan. Delegates from each participating State then took the floor to discuss the experiences of their countries in implementing the resolution. In addition to highlighting various successes and challenges, several of the delegates referred to potential opportunities for international assistance, particularly with regard to import/export controls and national capacity building. The segment ended with presentations by the OPCW, the IAEA and the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit, which each considered how the disarmament treaties they respectively support can synergize with and complement resolution 1540 (2004). During the ensuing discussions, several participants remarked that controls for biological weapons and materials appeared to have weaker implementation in many States than corresponding nuclear and chemical measures, and they considered whether the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may provide an impetus to close the apparent gap.

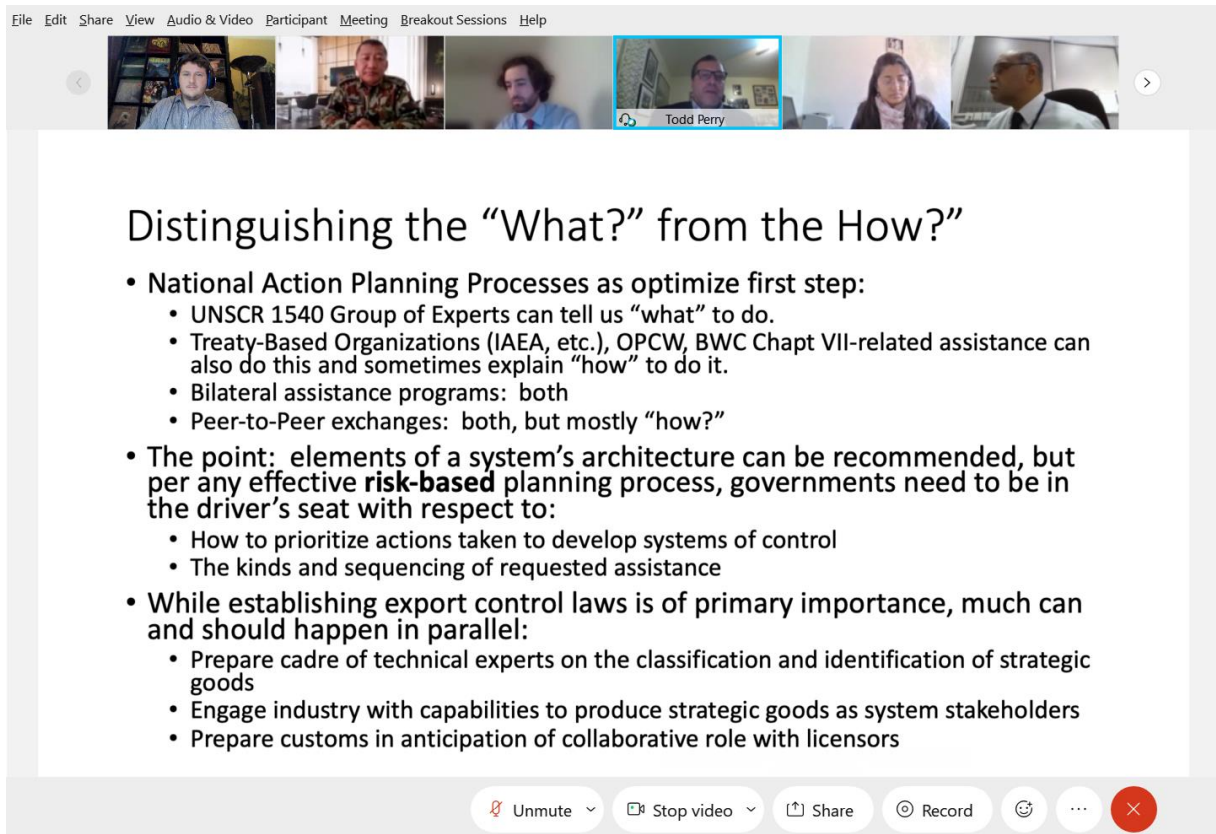


Mr. Szymon Bochenski of the OPCW fields questions from the floor during the second webinar.

The final session, held on 15 December, was centred on international partnerships for implementing resolution 1540 (2004). After a U.S. State Department expert briefed participants on methods for reducing proliferation risks through strategic trade control, a Sri Lankan expert recounted experiences with import/export control and strategic trade in the context of the resolution. Next, representatives from INTERPOL and the WCO explained how their respective organizations were helping States to strengthen 1540 implementation, and a 1540 Committee expert outlined an assistance-matching framework and described how States can formally request support. A second U.S. State Department expert then discussed restrictive trade measures that States can utilize on a national basis in the context of resolution 1540 (2004) and non-proliferation. In a final discussion session, participants focused on how to implement effective strategic trade controls, highlighting effective measures that included establishing national control lists and strengthening import/export licensing regimes.

As the programme concluded, UNRCPD informed participants that it would kick off a series of national roundtable meetings as part of a new phase of the project in 2021.

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Distinguishing the “What?” from the How?”

- National Action Planning Processes as optimize first step:
 - UNSCR 1540 Group of Experts can tell us “what” to do.
 - Treaty-Based Organizations (IAEA, etc.), OPCW, BWC Chapt VII-related assistance can also do this and sometimes explain “how” to do it.
 - Bilateral assistance programs: both
 - Peer-to-Peer exchanges: both, but mostly “how?”
- The point: elements of a system’s architecture can be recommended, but per any effective **risk-based** planning process, governments need to be in the driver’s seat with respect to:
 - How to prioritize actions taken to develop systems of control
 - The kinds and sequencing of requested assistance
- While establishing export control laws is of primary importance, much can and should happen in parallel:
 - Prepare cadre of technical experts on the classification and identification of strategic goods
 - Engage industry with capabilities to produce strategic goods as system stakeholders
 - Prepare customs in anticipation of collaborative role with licensors

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Mr. Todd Perry of the U.S. State Department delivers a presentation on strategic trade controls during the third webinar, held on 15 December 2020.

This webinar series was made possible by a financial contribution from the United States Department of State through its Export Control and Related-Border Security (EXBS) Program.



For more information on this project, please contact Mr. Steven Humphries, UNSCR-1540 Project Coordinator, UNRCPD, at steven.humphries@un.org.