

Keeping Weapons of Mass Destruction Out of Terrorist Hands

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The spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) – chemical, biological, nuclear and radiological - poses one of the most serious threats to international security. No country in the world today can remain indifferent to the catastrophic possibility that terrorists may acquire these deadly weapons and use them against innocent civilians. It is critically important to counter this threat by ensuring that all governments have the means to prevent the illicit production or trafficking of WMDs and the materials to produce them.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a party to all of the most important international non-proliferation treaties on WMDs, i.e. the Biological Weapons Convention, Chemical Weapons Convention, Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In addition, the government must also implement other WMD non-proliferation and counter-terrorism measures that have been adopted by the UN Security Council. But at present it lacks sufficient financial, technical and legal resources to fulfill all of these obligations in a timely and effective manner.

To address this challenge, Bosnia and Herzegovina will host an international gathering in Hotel "Vučko" (Jahorina) on 22-23 June 2009 to support development of a comprehensive national strategy for strengthening its capacities in the field of WMD non-proliferation and counter-terrorism. The meeting will bring together representatives of governments in the region, as well as from relevant international organizations that are engaged with B-H in this area of work. Representatives of academia and chemical industry will also take part.

The meeting will explore ways to facilitate cooperation among countries in the Western Balkans to eliminate the threat of WMD proliferation and related terrorism in the region, and to foster closer cooperation between interested parties and B-H to strengthen its own implementation efforts.

The meeting has been organised by the B-H Ministry of Foreign Affairs together with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the implementing agency for the Chemical Weapons Convention. Part of the OPCW's mandate is to ensure the non-proliferation of dangerous materials in the chemical domain, as well as to help strengthen the capacity of its Member States for assistance and protection against the possible use of chemical weapons.

In cooperation with the OPCW, the meeting could serve as a model for developing a more integrated approach toward WMD non-proliferation and international assistance on both national and regional levels. Principal issues that will be explored include *inter alia*:

- International assistance programmes in the sphere of nuclear, chemical and biological activities;
- The role of NGOs, industry and the scientific community in developing and implementing national non-proliferation and WMD anti-terrorism policies;

- International cooperation in preventing illegal trade and smuggling of WMD materials through borders;
- Bosnia and Herzegovina's experience and expertise in fighting WMD proliferation and WMD-related terrorism, and available international assistance in this area;
- Implementation of export-control obligations in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Security issues and collaboration with other relevant security institutions in the region in implementing non-proliferation and WMD counter-terrorism obligations; and
- Improving cooperation between national institutions, agencies and experts in the Western Balkans to more effectively control the "Intangible Transfer of Technology" that could help criminal or terrorist groups to develop illegal WMD capabilities.

We hope that the meeting's focus on integrated approaches and cooperation between all relevant stakeholders - governments, international organisations, industry and the scientific community - will strengthen multilateral approaches in this vital area. It will certainly help to create synergies between governments and international organisations for capacity building against weapons of mass destruction.

We firmly believe that global, regional and national security is impossible without such multilateral approaches, which strengthen international efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their related technologies and means of delivery.

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