**MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCTION AND STOCKPILING OF BACTERIOLOGICAL (BIOLOGICAL) AND TOXIN WEAPONS AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION**

BWC/MSP/2005/MX/WP.1
9 June 2005

ENGLISH ONLY

---

**Third Meeting**
**Geneva, 5-9 December 2005**

**Meeting of Experts**
**Geneva, 13-24 June 2005**
Item 5 of the provisional agenda
**Consideration of the content, promulgation, and adoption of codes of conduct for scientists**

# PRELIMINARY OVERVIEW OF AN INTERNATIONAL CODE OF CONDUCT RELATED TO THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

Prepared by Argentina

1. Within a national perspective, the relationship between ethical codes for science and, for example, educational strategies and laws are relevant to be established. In international contexts this is equally important, but considerably more difficult.

2. It is therefore worthwhile to investigate if it is possible to find smallest common denominators that might form the basis for an international agreement.

3. In relation to Biological Weapons, various efforts (nationals and international) have been made to translate voiced concerns into formalized codes. For example, the American Society for Microbiology (ASM) published in 1985 its Code of Ethics which obliged microbiologists to discourage any use of microbiology contrary to the welfare of humankind, though leaving the meaning of this phrase open for interpretation; in 1989 the US Council for Responsible Genetics (CRG) started a pledge for scientists not to participate knowingly in research and teaching that will further the development of chemical and biological agents.

4. In the Republic of Argentina, the Argentine Physical Society (AFA) in its Code of Ethics stands that is responsibility of the AFA to advise its members about observing elemental ethics rules as "Conscious participation in the development, improvement and fabrication of weapons of indiscriminate destruction such as nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, among others, is considered a breach of the basic ethical principles".

5. Scientific knowledge in the fields of many areas of research as biology, veterinary, agronomy, chemistry, genetics, genomics, proteomics, bioinformatics, microbiology, biochemistry, biotechnology, engineering, physics, etc. has implications for the BWC because it can lead to the discovery and/or development of new or modified biological agents or toxins and/or means of delivery.

6. Such code of conduct could include, *inter alia*, a statement that scientists will use their knowledge and skill for the advancement of human, animal, and plant welfare and will not conduct activities directed towards the use of micro-organisms or toxins or other biological agents for hostile purpose or in armed conflicts.

7. It is worth mention that the effectiveness of any new International Code of Conduct could challenge existing ways of thinking about the implications of the life sciences related to biological weapons, promote a basis for an equitable development in science and technology, raise connections between hitherto unconnected security and research issues, and be responsive of future scientific innovations.

8. As all should agree, one of the most important aspects of an International Code of Conduct which is problematic although it appears self-evident, is that an ethical standard requires substance in order to carry conviction.

9. However, providing ethical standards with substance is difficult in pluralistic contexts. The question is: given the plurality that reigns within ethics as a result of different cultural backgrounds, political or economic systems, religious or other ideologies, levels of development, etc., is it possible to find international norms that combine broad acceptance (international or interdisciplinary) with substance in their formulation?

10. The new International Code should encouraged to promote awareness among public and government bodies of the safety and security hazards associated with biological agents, toxins and their means of delivery.

11. Argentina seeks to initiate a process of reflection and dialogue. It is not only necessary that individual and scientific associations and communities related to life sciences be aware of and comply with the requirements of international conventions, but to actively work towards the clarification of their meanings.

12. Despite the known differences which exist between the CWC and the BWC, Argentina finds the idea of adopting a Project to establish the International Code of Conduct related to the BWC valid.

13. Argentina thinks that an International Code of Conduct related to the BWC should be adopted by professionals related to the different disciplines already cited.

14. Argentina also considers that this International Code should combine individual and collective responsibilities including state and non-state actors (scientists, professional organizations, regulators, founders, governments, NGO´s, etc).

15. The new International Code should recognize the importance and limitations of trying to establish rules specifying proper conduct on the difficult dual-use questions.

16. Among setting out certain standards and expectations for scientists, it should seek to initiate a process of critical reflection and dialogue, showing that the responsibility on biological weapons is not only a matter for individuals, but rather highlighted the importance of collective action.

17. In response to the threats that biological weapons impose, it is necessary to consider the possibility to discuss over different types of codes as: aspirational (code of ethics), educational (code of conduct) or enforceable (code of practice), and to notice their individual weakness, allowing consideration of an International Code (a new one) that takes the very best of each type.

18. In 2004, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has begun the process for developing a formal Code of Conduct to address the ethical considerations of those involved with the peaceful use of chemistry, establishing the Ethics Project of the OPCW.

19. Argentina's idea is to be developed in the heart of this Meeting of Experts, the Basic core of the future International Code of Conduct of the BWC, and with this basic document in hand, continue the dialogue with the different academic research centres, educational and other relevant institutions, organizations and academies, industry, in each country (State Parties) in order to promote further the discussion of the main topics of the new code.

20. In Argentina, we had already initiated the analysis of the possibility of developing the steps toward the promulgation of an International Code of Conduct related to the BWC.

21. The National Ethical Comity of Science and Technology (CECTE) of Argentina was created in April 2001, according to the Resolution 004/2001 and, afterwards, its guidelines were confirmed by Resolution 031/2002 and Resolution 600/2004.

22. CECTE belongs to the Secretary of Science and Technology of Argentina and is the reference organization in our country in relation to topics related to ethics in science and technology.

23. Members of the CECTE had actively participated in different international organizations where "ethics in science" was a subject of discussion (as example we can mention COMEST).

———