

Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

Chemical, biological, radiological nuclear (CBRN)

Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)

Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)

TOWARDS A NATIONAL CHEMICAL, BIOLOGICAL, RADIOLOGICAL, NUCLEAR CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR BARBADOS

On behalf of the Government of Barbados and people of Barbados, I wish to thank the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago for hosting us, the PGA for the invitation to attend this workshop and for the opportunity to engage other **CARICOM** and **Hemispheric Member States** in an effort to develop and enhance the necessary legislative framework and emergency response mechanisms which, in the event of a Biological threat will be beneficial to all the territories both nationally and regionally.

Indeed, a collaborative effort is needed if we are to realize our objective of a world free of weapons of mass destruction. By working together, establishing and strengthening partnerships we will also be able to attain our goal of enforcing a range of appropriate and effective measures against the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

The Anthrax scare in the USA in 2001 and the Ebola outbreaks in West Africa and the event the recent events in England where on two separate occasions chemical weapons were used to cause harm to persons and a similar event which occurred earlier in the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Malaysia where the brother of **Kim Jong-un** died after being exposed to VX nerve agent, drive home the point all too clearly that such threats are ever present and can manifest anywhere and anytime, and the

government of Barbados has long recognized that we are not immune from such attacks.

As recently as three years ago there was a Anthrax scare in Barbados when a white powdery substance was found in the mail. After testing it was discovered that the powder was harmless but it was another wake up call for Barbados.

Barbados is in the process of implementing a National Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear (CBRN) contingency plan with the aim of protecting its people and the environment. It includes a set of emergency procedures that will govern an inter-agency coordinated response to a CBRN threat.

The aims of this contingency plan are to:

- To establish guidelines to effectively respond to any CBRN hazard or emergency.
- To identify the Roles and Responsibilities of key Response Agencies and establish command and control guidelines.
- To establish a communication policy and procedures for informing the general population.
- To develop effective public education and awareness programmes
- To identify the response resource requirements for each CBRN hazard type.
- To ensure that appropriate training, orientation and equipment are provided to the relevant agencies and departments.

In fact, more than sixty (60) persons from various agencies have received training through the OPCW. This training was in the areas of assistance and protection and the transfers regime for the identification of scheduled chemicals by customs departments and laboratory skills. This was all made possible through the support from the Canadian government.

It should be noted that as a result of these opportunities, Barbados and the region have benefitted in the following ways; more personnel have been exposed to training; draft legislative documents have been prepared; and there is improved emergency response coordination.

The objective of all this, is to promote better preparedness and a more rapid and consistent response to CBRN threats.

In order to be effective the CBRN plan takes an integrated approach and includes national, regional and international persons and agencies to provide assistance and resources as required in response actions. This meant that national agencies had to be given certain responsibilities to allow for the planning, management, coordination and implementation of an efficient and effective response to CBRN events. These include:

- The Chief Medical Officer who is the focal point responsible for the National Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Plan.
- The Ministry of Health, which is the Regulatory Agency for the Biological aspect of the Plan.
- The Environmental Protection Department, as the Regulatory Agency for Chemical, Radiological and Nuclear aspects of the Plan.

As it stands, there is no single item of national legislation which covers the full range of actions and activities to be carried out under the National CBRN Contingency Plan, however, there are a number of pieces of legislation which provide the framework for and support the activities in this plan. These include but are not limited to:

1. The Emergency Management Act, CAP160A, 2013
2. Anti-Terrorism Act Cap 158
3. Defence Act (1979)
4. The Offences Against the Persons Act Cap 141

5. Marine Pollution Control Act (1998)
6. Radiation Protection Act CAP353A
9. The Notifiable Disease Regulations, CAP 44
10. Barbados Territorial Waters Act (1977)
11. Marine Boundaries and Jurisdiction Act (1978)
12. National Conservation Commission Act (1985)
13. Coastal Zone Management Act (1998)
14. Marine Pollution Control Act (1998)
15. Radiation Protection Act CAP353A
16. Safety and Health at Work Act CAP 356
17. United Nations Security Council Resolution, 1540

National Legislation

With regards to national legislation on CBRN hazards, steps are being made to this end, however it is still at the preparatory stages.

Steps include the drafting of a National Policy Paper which will itself provide guidance on the steps to be taken towards legislative drafting. It should be noted in this regard that not all of the provisions of the CWC are relevant to Barbados, for instance trade in radioactive and nuclear substances.

Efforts are therefore ongoing to ensure that the legislation to be drafted and passed is fit for purpose. Cabinet has already approved that a National Implementation Framework document which was previously prepared with assistance from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) can be utilised to guide the development of the National Policy Paper.

Additionally, Government already has in hand draft model legislation emanating from a Regional Drafters Workshop held in March 2017.

National CBRN Contingency Plan – Reports are that a draft document is currently being reviewed by key governmental stakeholders, including the Ministry of Health and Wellness/Office of the Chief Medical Officer and the Department of Emergency Management (DEM). In addition, the OPCW Regional Consultant has been informally requested to provide input on the draft CBRN with a view to further refining the document.

There are also plans to convene a national stakeholders consultation on the National Plan.

Finally, a Cabinet Paper is in draft outlining, inter alia, training proposals with respect to implementation of the National Plan. The intent in this regard is to ensure that Barbados is equipped with a cross-section of responders that can adequately and appropriately respond to varied scales and types of emergencies. The draft Cabinet Paper is currently under review by stakeholder Agencies.

All this effort by Barbados is in recognition of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1540 mandates which asserts that all States shall refrain from providing any form of support to non-State actors that attempt to develop, acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, transfer or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons.

The best way to ensure that Barbados does not become a destination or a trans-shipment point for a dangerous biological agent or toxic chemicals and to ensure that our environment and people are secure from this ever evolving threat is to implement a comprehensive legal framework that is responsive to current CBRN threat and that facilitates enforcement.

The CBRN Plan also co-exists with other major contingency plans, managed and operated by local and regional organisations, facilities, installations and response agencies and is intended to complement other relevant plans as part of an overall response action. Relevant interfacing plans include but are not limited to:

- The Barbados National Disaster Plan
- National Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Plan
- Mass Casualty Plan
- Mass Fatality Plan
- Dangerous Infectious Diseases Plan
- Incident Command System
- National Oil Spill Contingency Plan
- Medical Waste Management Plan

In terms of administration, there is a CBRN committee charged with the responsibility for providing advice on strategic policymaking related to the Plan. Key functions of the response committee which comprises representative from different agencies with different specialized capabilities include:

- Providing strategic oversight and direction for the effectiveness of the National CBRN contingency plan
- Evaluate preparedness for response to a CBRN incident
- Oversee ongoing arrangements between key stakeholders
- to ensure that participating agencies receive appropriate training
- provide advice on the funding direction for the CBRN plan

The contingency plan will include strategies for information gathering and dissemination outlining Organisational structure and chain of command to allow for effective response by participating agencies. It also contains plans for incidence response corresponding to what type of threat is present (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear).

Our region, though not generally traders in chemical weapons, needs to take account that the world is a global environment where the risk of terrorism is ever present; and therefore we can be susceptible to chemical emergencies through intentional acts or as a result of natural disasters.

The CBRN contingency plan is critical to dealing with systemic challenges and to building and enhancing institutional capacities to match these threats as well as raise the level of preparedness and response mechanisms. Barbados has taken the necessary steps in establishing a comprehensive contingency plan, mapping out responsibilities for and including different stakeholders and agencies actively working towards effective CBRN disaster management.

Conclusion

The Government of Barbados is firmly of the view that chemical and biological weapons legislation needs to be part of a more comprehensive Environmental Protection Act which will cover the full range of environmental and health hazards confronted by our society. To this end the Government of Barbados intends to actively pursue further implementation through the establishment of a Policy Statement on CBRN Weapons. This will form the impetus for the next step which is the development and implementation of the requisite legislation as required by the Convention.