1. Please describe your experience with BWC international cooperation and assistance.

Education and Outreach + Capacity Building

1) I was involved in translating from English into Russian cartoons on Responsible Conduct of Life Science Research. (Tatiana Novosselova, Malcolm Dando and the team).

2) In 2022-2023 a team of 3 instructors designed and conducted 3 rounds of online interactive interdisciplinary workshops for life science and IR students from Germany, China and Russia. Each round lasted for 2 months and included lectures, meeting with experts, teamwork and final presentations. The project was titled "Responsible conduct of life science research – Identifying Global Problems, Proposing Join Solutions”.

3) Since 2017 I have been hosting international cross-disciplinary expert discussions on the topical issues related to strengthening the BWC.

1. What does “international cooperation and assistance” mean to you?

International cooperation is an umbrella term which includes broad variety of activities which are not limited to purely technical aspects or biological research and development. “Cooperation” is a process-oriented concept, while “assistance” is more result oriented. Cooperation means establishing and sustaining fruitful and productive interaction among two or more actors. Although cooperation may be beneficial for only one party, the ideal format of cooperation should be mutually beneficial. Mutually beneficial cooperation may have the most resilient and sustainable character. Assistance means support and aid. The character of assistance may be proactive or reactive depending on the mode of how the donor and the recipient interact with each other. Not necessarily assistance strengthens national independence and technological sovereignty of the recipient state. If a recipient nation does not have variety of options and proposals to choose from, the optimal regime of interaction, cooperation and assistance may not fully correspond to national interests and security concerns of the recipient state. However, due to the vagueness of the concept enclosed in the second paragraph of Article X, it would be almost impossible for a recipient state to prove that a specific mode of international cooperation and assistance hampers its economic or technological development.

1. What is the scope of Article X, and what is its role in facilitating international cooperation and assistance?

Article X provides a framework for cooperation and assistance. The need to regularly review implementation of the BWC stimulates states parties to the BWC to keep an eye on how they contribute to implementation of the provisions of the Article X. However, the wording of Article X is so foggy and blurry, that it not only opens windows of opportunities for productive and mutually beneficial collaborations but also to various sorts of manipulations and misconduct which trigger all sorts of allegations and security concerns.

1. What is the relationship between Article X and international or civil society organizations?

Article X mentions international organizations as those who together with states parties to the BWC may contribute to the further development and peaceful application of scientific discoveries in the field of life sciences. So, as I can see it, the BWC recognizes international organizations as legitimate partners of the BWC states parties. The status of civil society organizations remains unclear to me in the context of the BWC. I understand that the BWC was negotiated and open for signing in times when NGOs were not recognized as actors of IR with the same status as IGO. If we check TPNW article 7 para 5 says:” Assistance under this Article may be provided, inter alia, through the United Nations system, international, regional or national organizations or institutions, non-governmental organizations or institutions, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, or national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, or on a bilateral basis”. Land Mine ban convention Art. 6 para 4 “Each State Party in a position to do so shall provide assistance for mine clearance and related activities. Such assistance may be provided, inter alia, through the United Nations system, international or regional organizations or institutions, non-governmental organizations or institutions, or on a bilateral basis, or by contributing to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance, or other regional funds that deal with demining.” Cluster Munitions convention Art. 6.2. “Each State Party in a position to do so shall provide technical, material and financial assistance to States Parties affected by cluster munitions, aimed at the implementation of the obligations of this Convention. Such assistance may be provided, inter alia, through the United Nations system, international, regional or national organisations or institutions, non-governmental organisations or institutions, or on a bilateral basis.”

1. Have you or your government/organization ever engaged in international cooperation and assistance under Article X, and what was that experience like?

Rospotrebnadzor coordinates cooperation and assistance and reviews accumulated experience on a regular basis. Is see how the feedback from the recipient states is taken into account when improving the modes of interaction and the structure of the projects. Russia has a unique experience of both receiving and supplying the assistance.

1. Do Article X reports provide sufficient insight into the scope of international cooperation activities related to the BWC?

I appreciate the variety and scope of information provided by SP annually. However, it takes effort to systematize the diversity of papers. My impression is that SP are not interested in making the job of research easy. I guess, it would be a challenging task to analyze all available information, identify positive and negative trends, unnecessary overlaps and unattended areas which lack appropriate efforts.

It would be good if ISU could continue uploading information on the web page with Article X reports.

https://disarmament.unoda.org/biological-weapons/assistance-and-cooperation/national-article-x-reports/

1. What is the relationship between states parties’ obligations under Article III and Article X?

My feeling the character of Russian allegations towards the cooperation between the US and Ukraine have revealed sensitive if not painful moments in relationship between these two articles. Russia has expressed concerns of the same nature towards the cooperation between the US and other post-Soviet states. Corresponding cooperation and assistance programs conducted by some members of European Union has been also emerging several times in Russian media during last decade.

1. Do you have any experience with export controls or international sanctions related to biology or the BWC?

I personally do not have any experience. However, I can say that sanctions imposed on Russia in response to its actions towards Ukraine are hampering Russian life science. Formally, this hampering contradicts the spirit of article X. I see how Russian government is currently promoting the recently emerged concepts of biological sovereignty and technological sovereignty which supposes strengthening national basis needed for further development of peaceful life science research and responsible innovations. In this context expanding the network of cooperation and assistance is Eurasia is currently seen by Russia as the way of strengthening its technological sovereignty and improving regional biosecurity.

1. Is there sufficient international cooperation and assistance taking place under the BWC? What is impeding states parties from cooperating?

I feel geopolitical confrontation which is currently unfolding in many regions of the world hampers international cooperation. Any sorts of confrontations are not conducive for cooperation. One more point: there is difference between the expectations of the recipient states and what the donors are ready to supply. The technological superpowers are not ready to decrease the multi-sectoral dependence of the developing states. To some extent, current mode of cooperation and assistance sustains the status quo. By status quo I imply the deep biotechnological divide.

1. Would it be beneficial to have a body or process to monitor international cooperation and assistance and to resolve disputes between states parties, and what would that look like?

I feel like this is not a good time for any new global governance body. But an ad-hoc regional coordinating bodies or ad-hoc coordinating institutions on the basis of existing multilateral formats might be a good thing.

1. How can states parties improve international cooperation and assistance?

I feel that thinking of how to improve the decoration of a living room when the whole building is on fire would not be the best solution. International cooperation and assistance suffer from the lack of trust and unresolved regional conflicts. At the same time, pragmatic cooperation aimed solving practical problems may be a confidence building measure by itself.

1. Are there international cooperation and assistance resources outside the BWC that are underutilized?

I find it difficult to answer this question. I feel that the problem roots not in the lack of resources but in the crisis of world order which has been triggered by the departure from the principle of equal security and mutual consideration of interests.