The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) opened for signature in 1972 and entered into force in 1975. The Convention is a key element in the international community’s efforts to address disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It was the first international treaty prohibiting an entire category of such weapons. The Convention currently has 182 States parties.

Scope of the Biological Weapons Convention

Key provisions of the Treaty include binding obligations on States parties:

- to never under any circumstances acquire or retain biological weapons (Article I);
- to destroy or divert to peaceful purposes biological weapons and associated resources (Article II);
- to not transfer, or in any way assist, encourage or induce anyone else to acquire or retain biological weapons (Article III);
- to take any national measures necessary to implement the provisions of the BWC domestically (Article IV);
- to consult bilaterally and multilaterally to solve any problems with the implementation of the BWC (Article V);
- to request the UN Security Council to investigate alleged breaches of the BWC and to comply with its subsequent decisions (Article VI);
- to assist States parties which have been exposed to danger as a result of a violation of the BWC (Article VII);
- to do all of the above in a way that protects and encourages the peaceful uses of biological science and technology (Article X).

BWC Implementation

BWC States parties strive to ensure that the Convention remains relevant and effective, taking into account the changes since it entered into force. States parties meet every five years to review the operation of the Convention.

Since 2002, BWC States parties have developed intersessional work programmes between the Review Conferences that include annual Meetings of Experts (MX) and Meetings of States Parties (MSP). The Eighth Review Conference took place in November 2016. Ambassador Dr. György Molnár of Hungary presided over the conference which agreed that States parties would continue to hold annual meetings from 2017 to 2020. The Ninth Review Conference will take place in 2021. BWC meetings also witness strong engagement from civil society, for example scientific associations, research institutes and NGOs.

Current Intersessional Programme 2018-2020

In December 2017, the annual MSP, under the Chairmanship of Ambassador Amandeep Singh Gill of India, established an intersessional programme for 2018-2020. Twelve days are allocated to the intersessional programme each year, with annual MSPs preceded by annual MXs. The MXs are held back-to-back for

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1 For more information: [http://www.unog.ch/bwc](http://www.unog.ch/bwc); E-mail: bwc@un.org; twitter: @bwcisu
eight days at least three months before the annual MSP. The five MXs are open-ended and consider the following topics:

- MX1 Cooperation and assistance, with a particular focus on strengthening cooperation and assistance under Article X (two days);
- MX2 Review of developments in the field of science and technology related to the Convention (two days);
- MX3 Strengthening national implementation (one day);
- MX4 Assistance, Response and Preparedness (two days);
- MX5 Institutional Strengthening of the Convention (one day).

Each annual MSP considers the outcomes and factual reports of the MXs. The MSPs are also responsible for managing the intersessional programme.

The BWC Implementation Support Unit

The Implementation Support Unit (ISU) is housed within the Geneva Branch of UNODA. Accordingly, UNODA is responsible for the recruitment, selection and performance reviews of staff members and for all other administrative issues such as office space, procurement of equipment, leave and travel requests and training. UNODA has fiduciary responsibility and manages the voluntary contributions described below, while the United Nations Office at Geneva manages the assessed contributions received from BWC States Parties. Created in 2006 and launched in August 2007, the BWC ISU forms the core of the Secretariat of BWC meetings; maintains and develops the treaty’s website; receives and distributes information submitted by States parties annually under the system of Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs); collates details of national measures to implement all aspects of the Convention; acts as a clearing house for requests for and offers of assistance; interacts with relevant international organizations, scientific and academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations; and attends relevant meetings and events to promote the BWC. The ISU also assists the Chair of BWC meetings in promoting universality of the Convention; conducts outreach; administers a sponsorship programme for experts from developing States parties; maintains details of progress towards universality and reports on progress to States parties. The Eighth Review Conference extended the mandate of the ISU until 2021.

Voluntary contributions

Since 2006, UNODA has received five contributions from the European Union (EU) to support its BWC-related activities. Other States parties have also made voluntary contributions to UNODA to support implementation of the BWC. Together with the ISU, UNODA has used such contributions to assist national implementation efforts, promote the submission of CBMs, and to raise awareness and promote the universalisation of the Convention. The ISU also administers the BWC sponsorship programme, which enables experts from developing countries to attend BWC meetings in Geneva. Further, UNODA has recently received funds from Canada, France and Japan in support of strengthening assistance, response and preparedness activities under the Convention.

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<th>BWC Facts &amp; Figures</th>
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<tr>
<td>➢ The BWC has 182 States parties. A further five States have signed but not ratified and 10 States have neither signed nor ratified. (As of June 2019).</td>
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<td>➢ Over 125 States parties have provided information through the CBM process. More than 70 States parties participate annually. The highest participation to date was in 2016 when 82 States parties provided information.</td>
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<td>➢ 400 to 700 delegates from over 110 States parties participate in annual meetings under the BWC. These meetings regularly include up to 200 technical experts from around the globe.</td>
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