The Biological Weapons Convention

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Overview

• BWC in a nutshell
• BWC Articles
• Why join the BWC?
• BWC Meetings and Activities
• Role and Function of the BWC-ISU
• Challenges
Disarmament is an integral element of a peaceful and prosperous world. It is one of the pillars on which the United Nations was built. [...] Disarmament can play an important role in ending existing conflicts and preventing the outbreak of new strife. Disarmament and arms control processes provide the breathing space for confidence to be built, stability to be strengthened and trust to be established. This was true during the Cold War and it is true now.
“Determined, for the sake of all mankind, to exclude completely the possibility of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins being used as weapons”

“Convinced that such use would be repugnant to the conscience of mankind and that no effort should be spared to minimise this risk”
Biological Weapons Convention

prohibits **development, production, stockpiling, acquisition, retention** or **transfer** of BWs

- opened for signature on 10 April 1972
- EiF on 26 March 1975
- First multilateral disarmament treaty banning an entire category of WMD
- Non-discriminatory in nature
- Unlimited duration
- Open to any state
Biological Weapons Convention

- Continued political interest in the BWC
- Relevance of BWC
New States Parties 2012-2016

- Marshall Is.: 1
- Cameroon: 4
- Myanmar: 1
- Mauritania: 2
- Côte d'Ivoire: 5
- Nauru
- Guyana
- Malawi
- Angola
- Liberia
- Nepal
- Guinea
Article I

Each State Party to this Convention undertakes Never in any circumstances to develop, produce, stockpile or otherwise acquire or retain:

1) Microbial or other biological agents, or toxins whatever their origin or method of production, of types and in quantities that have no justification for prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes;

2) Weapons, equipment or means of delivery designed to use such agents or toxins for hostile purposes or in armed conflict."

Article II

To destroy or divert to peaceful purposes, as soon as possible but not later than nine months after EiF, all agents, toxins, weapons, equipment and means of delivery specified in Article I.

Article III

Not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever, or in any way assist, encourage or induce any State, group of States or international organizations to manufacture or otherwise acquire biological weapons.

Article IV

To take any national measures necessary to implement the provisions of the BWC domestically.
Multidimensional nature of BWC

Article V  To consult bilaterally and multilaterally to solve any problems with the implementation of the BWC

Article VI  To request the UN Security Council to investigate alleged breaches of the BWC and to comply with its subsequent decisions

Article VII  To assist States which have been exposed to a danger as a result of a violation of the BWC, if the Security Council decides that such Party has been exposed to danger as a result of violation of the Convention

Article VIII  Nothing in this Convention shall be interpreted as in any way limiting or detracting from the obligations assumed by any State under the 1925 Geneva Protocol

Article X  SPs undertake to facilitate, and have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the use of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins for peaceful purposes

Convention shall be implemented in a manner designed to avoid hampering the economic or technological development of States Parties or international cooperation in the field of peaceful activities
Multidimensional nature of BWC

**Article XI** Amendments to the Convention (majority of SPs required)

**Article XII** Review Conference to assure that the purposes of the preamble and the provisions of the Convention are being realized

Review to take into account any **new scientific and technological developments** relevant to the BWC

**Article XIII** Convention of **unlimited duration**

Right of each SP to **withdraw** from the BWC if it decides that extraordinary events have jeopardized the supreme interests of its country

**Art XIV** Convention **open to all States** for signature

State which does not sign before EiF, **may accede to it any time**

Russia, UK and US designated as the **Depositary Governments**

EiF after the deposit of instruments of ratification by **22 Governments**, incl. the Depositaries

EiF on the date of deposit for those states that deposited instruments of ratification or accession subsequent to EiF
Why Join the BWC?

**Principle Advantages Offered by Security Regimes**

- Enhance security by building trust & stabilizing expectations
- Offer distinct control (verification) mechanisms
- Provide high quality information
- Create linkages among substantive issues
- Offer established negotiation framework
- Define exact scope and extent of cooperation
Three technologies that will transform warfare:

- Autonomous weapons
- Bioweapons
- Cyberwar
Why Join the BWC?

Reinforce Commitment & Strengthen Norms

- Fundamental role in collective security

- Need to strengthen norm against BWs and make it universal

- Forum for dialogue and cooperation in meeting intl. security obligations

- Joining BWC will help meeting requirements of UNSCR 1540 Op. 8 calls upon all States:
  - To promote the universal adoption and full implementation, and, where necessary, strengthening of multilateral treaties [...]
  - To renew and fulfil their commitment to multilateral cooperation [...]

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs
**Why Join the BWC?**

**Universal Adherence**

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<tr>
<th>State</th>
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<th>NPT</th>
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Why Join the BWC?

Comparison Assessed Contributions 2017

Note: 2017 OPCW PB in EUR 65,529,600 (exchange rate of USD/EUR 0.95 applied)
2017 CTBTO PB: split budget (EUR/USD): USD 128, 120,000
2017 BWC Assessed contributions: USD 1,109,500
Why Join the BWC?

Development and Capacity Building

• Forum for coordination and strengthening natl. preparedness and response capacities against bio threats
  ✓ Relates directly to public health, veterinary and agricultural emergency response capacities
  ✓ Positive security guarantees under Article VII

• Socio-economic dimension
  ✓ Right to participate in the fullest possible exchange of information, equipment, and materials for peaceful purposes
  ✓ To contribute to the advancement and application of the life sciences

• Benefit from capacity development programmes
  ✓ Bi- and multilateral assistance available
  ✓ Sponsorship programme
BWC Meetings and Activities

• Annual Meeting of States Parties (4-8 December 2017)
  • Meeting will seek to make progress on issues of substance and process for the period before the next Review Conference, with a view to reaching consensus on an intersessional process.
  • Chair: NAM

• Other Key Activities
  • Implementation of EU Council Decision 2016/51 in support of BWC (€2,310,000, 2016-2018)
  • Strengthening global mechanisms and capabilities for responding to deliberate use of disease (July 2017-March 2018)
BWC Roles and Responsibilities

• 3 Regional Groups
  • Eastern European Group (EG); 28 Members, Coordinator: Latvia
  • Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and Other States (NAM); 116 Members, Coordinator: Venezuela
  • Western Group (WG); 33 Members, Coordinator: Australia

• Role of the Depositories
  • BWC is not a UN Treaty
  • 3 Depositories: Russia, United Kingdom, United States
  • Convene meetings and propose dates
  • Promote treaty
  • Maintain lists of ratification and accession
  • Seat on General Committee (Bureau) during RevCons
BWC Implementation Support Unit
Basic Facts and Mandate

- Established by decision of Sixth Review Conference in 2006
- Housed in Geneva Branch of UN Office of Disarmament Affairs
- Funded by assessed contributions from all BWC States Parties (3 full time staff)

Tasks
- Provide administrative support for BWC meetings
- Facilitate communication among States Parties and with relevant organizations
- Support national implementation efforts
- Administer confidence-building measures (CBMs)
- Support universalization activities
- Administer the assistance database and facilitate match-making
- Support the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Eighth Review Conference
Biological Weapons Convention
Strengths, Weaknesses and Challenges

• **Strengths:**
  - Clear, comprehensive ban: no exceptions, few loopholes
  - Strong international norm, never publicly challenged
  - Futureproof (so far...)

• **Weaknesses:**
  - No organisation or implementing body
  - No systematic monitoring of implementation or compliance
  - Uneven national implementation
  - No systematic assessment of needs or provision of assistance

• **Challenges:**
  - Deep divisions over the way ahead
  - Lack of a coordinated policy and response capabilities at the global level for responding to the deliberate use of biological weapons
  - Rapid developments in life sciences on BWC
Conclusions

- BWC key pillar of multilateral security architecture
- Strong norm against BWs established over the years
- Multidimensional Nature of the BWC
- Need to universalize the Convention
- Various benefits in joining the BWC
For more information ...

www.unog.ch/bwc

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