

Monday 28th November 2022

The Ninth BWC Review Conference: setting the scene

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) was the first treaty to globally prohibit an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. It was signed in 1972 (entering into force three years later), so this year marks a half-century for the existence of the BWC and 2025 will mark 50 years of the Convention having entered into force. Every five years a Review Conference is convened which offers the opportunity for the states parties to carry out a full review of the purposes and the provisions of the Convention, taking into account relevant scientific and technological developments. This includes important forward-looking elements. International agreements are initially shaped by the concerns at the forefront of the minds of the negotiators during the period they were negotiated, making them creatures of their time. One common feature of treaties dealing with active problems is they include some form of review process. This is an inherent recognition that the contexts that any treaty operates within will change over time and review processes exist to ensure treaties stay relevant and up to date in their activities.

The three-week Review Conference is being held in Geneva and was preceded by a Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) which held most of its activities in April, including discussion of substantive issues. There have been many other contributions into this review process, including the experiences of the annual inter-sessional meetings – the Meeting of Experts (MXs) and Meetings of States Parties (MSPs) – held since the Eighth Review Conference in 2016 and a diplomatic retreat held in Montreux just a few weeks ago, together with a wide range of other gatherings either in person or as virtual events. More than 30 working papers have been submitted to the Review Conference.

The President-designate for the Review Conference is Ambassador Leonardo Bencini (Italy) with Tatiana Molcean (Moldova) nominated as Chair of the Committee of the Whole and Sarah Lindegren (Sweden) as Chair of the Drafting Committee.

Issues relating to the Ninth BWC Review Conference

There are a number of issues to be discussed during the Review Conference and it is worth emphasising that none stands alone as BWC Review Conferences work towards a single final document. This means that a balanced package of proposals has to be brought together covering a range of issues. An outline of some of the issues is provided here. The President-designate has appointed facilitators to assist in relation to specific issue areas and indicated that further facilitators may be appointed later.

Access to peaceful uses of the life sciences is covered by Article X of the Convention, embodying a bargain that the renunciation of biological weapons and the control of the hostile uses of the life sciences should be implemented in such a way as to facilitate and promote the use of the life sciences for peaceful purposes. The facilitator for this issue area is Ambassador Maria Teresa Almojuela (Philippines) who was the Chair of MX1 on this subject in 2018.

The ongoing rapid advances within the life sciences mean that the BWC operates within scientific and technological (S&T) landscape which is constantly changing and creating advances for peaceful uses as well as possible hostile uses. The need for the Convention to operate effectively within this constantly changing context has led to numerous proposals for some form of ongoing systematic review to identify risks and

opportunities for the Convention. Such an ongoing review would also be a practical input into national policy processes. The facilitator for this issue area is Ljupčo Jivan Gjorgjinski (North Macedonia) who was Chair of the 2018 MSP.

All treaties prohibiting classes of weapons require action at the national as well as the international level and the importance of national implementation obligations has been the focus of many BWC discussions. Not only are there many states parties with incomplete national measures but the changing S&T context means that every country should be carrying out regular reviews of measures to help keep them effective. Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) arrangements agreed at earlier BWC meetings allow countries to provide some transparency in relevant activities. Thus far in 2022, there have been 95 CBM submissions received by the Implementation Support Unit (ISU), a record annual number (and the year is not yet over). The facilitator for these issues is Grisselle del Carmen Rodriguez Ramirez (Panama), Chair of the 2020 MX5.

Response to use of biological weapons falls within Article VII of the Convention which provides for assistance by states parties if a state party is 'exposed to danger' because of a breach of the Convention. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted impacts that diseases can have on contemporary societies. The facilitator for this issue area is Tiyamike Banda (Malawi).

The current ISU mandate ends at this Review Conference. Consideration of the future of the ISU will include the scope of its work and the level of staffing, which in turn will be connected with whatever future inter-sessional work programme is agreed. Henriëtte van Gulik (Netherlands) is facilitator for strengthening the ISU and related financial issues.

The promotion of universal membership of the Convention is a regular topic for discussion. At the opening of the Seventh Review Conference (2011) there were 165 states parties which rose to 177 by the opening of the Eighth Review Conference (2016). The current number of states parties is 184 with the most recent addition being Namibia.

A core area where there has been significant divergence of views is the question of verification, with some delegations calling for negotiations on new multilateral arrangements and others resisting such calls. A significant development has been the US proposal, put forward by Under Secretary of State Bonnie Jenkins at the 2020 MSP (held in 2021), for a working group which would look at further measures including those that could 'enhance assurance of compliance'. Canada and the Netherlands have proposed text for the final document on the establishment of an 'Experts Working Group' that has been published as working paper WP.2.

Influences of the geo-political situation

The geo-political situation has seen significant tensions between countries during this year. This confrontational context loomed large during the PrepCom with many references being made to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Russia has made allegations about US-funded biological facilities in Ukraine that were repeated in the PrepCom and other international meetings. A 'Formal Consultative Meeting' was convened in response to a Russian request under BWC Article V which met in September (with a brief procedural meeting in August) but did not reach any substantive conclusions. The key sentence of the report of the Meeting was: 'No consensus was reached regarding the outcome of the Formal Consultative Meeting'. Subsequent to this, Russia requested an investigation through BWC Article VI which was presented to the Security Council together with a draft resolution which was considered by the Council and rejected. The allegations have found little traction with experts from across the world who have familiarity with peaceful biological research programmes and who can see nothing in what has been published that is inconsistent with peaceful research.

This is the first report from the Ninth BWC Review Conference (28 November-16 December 2022). These reports have been produced for all BWC meetings with NGO registration since the Sixth Review Conference (2006) by the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP). They are available from <<http://www.bwpp.org/reports.html>> and <<http://www.cbw-events.org.uk/bwc-rep.html>>. A subscription link is available on each webpage. Financial support for these reports has been gratefully received from Global Affairs Canada. The reports are written by Richard Guthrie, CBW Events, who is solely responsible for their contents <richard@cbw-events.org.uk>.

Tuesday 29th November 2022

The opening of the Review Conference and the start of the general debate

The Ninth five-yearly Review Conference for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) met in Salle XIX of the Palais des Nations, one of the more modern conference rooms which allows for proceedings to be viewed on the UN Web TV service. The official BWC website for the Review Conference can be found at <https://meetings.unoda.org/bwc-revcon/biological-weapons-convention-ninth-review-conference-2022> which includes links to official documents and to other information.

The opening of the Conference

The Conference was opened by Izumi Nakamitsu, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs who oversaw the election of Ambassador Leonardo Bencini (Italy) as President. On taking his place on the podium, the President thanked the Conference for expressing confidence in him and noted that the Review Conference was one year late because of the pandemic, but that the effects of the pandemic had also meant that the preparation time for this Review Conference was much shorter than usual. He noted that there were numerous working papers tabled, many containing concrete proposals that were well developed and were ripe for action rather than continued consideration.

The opening formalities were fairly brief, with the usual steps such as the adoption of the agenda and decisions on participation of observer states and international bodies, etc. The rules of procedure were adopted as adjusted to follow past practice which includes that Committees may decide to hold certain meetings in public. The President noted the attendance of national experts from developing countries supported through the sponsorship programme operated by the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) and thanked those who financially supported the programme.

The meeting moved on to the appointment of office holders within the Conference. Russia took the floor to highlight that their nominations to positions had been blocked within the Eastern European Group (EEG) by one, unnamed, member of the Group. Russia had therefore decided to withdraw from the EEG and establish a 'one state group', claiming that this new group would have equivalent status to the other regional groups. Nevertheless, all Conference positions were allocated via the three long-standing regional groups. Tatiana Molcean (Moldova) was confirmed as Chair of the Committee of the Whole and Sarah Lindegren (Sweden) as Chair of the Drafting Committee. The Chair of the Credentials Committee is to be an unnamed member of the delegation of South Africa. Other positions agreed included Vice-Presidents of the Conference and Vice Chairs of the Committees, but not all positions were filled as the regional groups had not completed their internal nomination processes and so this agenda item would remain open. The appointed facilitators remain as listed in the first of this series of daily reports.

In introducing the indicative programme of work, published on the Conference website, the President noted he would be inviting the four Chairs of the Meetings of States Parties (MSPs) held each year from 2017 through 2020 to address a plenary session. He also indicated he wished to hold as many meetings in public as possible. [*Historical note:* the meetings of the Committee of the Whole during the Eighth Review Conference (2016) were in public for the first reading of the article-by-article review and remained so for

most of the second reading before moving into private session. They were entirely in public during the Seventh Review Conference (2011). The Drafting Committee has not been convened since the Fifth Review Conference (2001 & 2002) and it is not clear from the records available to this author whether those meetings were public or private.]

Substantive discussions

The substantive discussions started with a brief video address from UN Secretary-General (UNSG) António Guterres who noted that when the BWC was negotiated the global community came together to declare that the deliberate use of disease as a weapon was an affront to humanity. He urged considerations of three specific actions: to ‘give teeth’ to the BWC’s ‘accountability provisions’ to ensure that scientific advances are not exploited for hostile purposes; to ‘update our thinking on verification and compliance to fit today’s threats’; and to provide the increased financial and human resources the BWC needs to carry out this important work.

High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu then addressed the Conference. She suggested that no topic should be off the table in the quest to strengthen the BWC. She focused on four steps which addressed the UNSG’s three actions in a slightly different formulation in which she spoke of the need to ‘operationalize’ and ‘institutionalize’ the BWC, providing it with appropriate resources and exploring verifying compliance.

The exchanges of views in the general debate – the opportunity for delegations to outline their positions in public statements – started with ‘high-level statements’ (those made by visiting dignitaries above the rank of ambassador rank), statements on behalf of groups of states and then national statements. Where copies of statements have been provided by those who delivered them, the ISU will place these on the Conference website. High-level statements were given by Italy, Kazakhstan and Serbia. Group statements were given by Azerbaijan (for the non-aligned group of BWC states parties), the European Union, Belarus (for the Collective Security Treaty Organization [CSTO]), Germany (for the Global Partnership), Russia (for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO]), Cambodia (for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN]), Russia (for the Commonwealth of Independent States [CIS]) and Estonia (for the Baltic states). National statements were given by Russia, Colombia, Finland, Uruguay, France, India, Pakistan, Lao PDR, Republic of Korea, Moldova, Georgia, Japan, Nepal, China, Czechia, Philippines, Kuwait, Iraq, Germany Dominican Republic, Netherlands, Australia, Singapore, Mongolia, Indonesia, Chile, Canada, Timor Leste, New Zealand, Nigeria, Switzerland, Türkiye, Sweden, Austria and Algeria. Rights of reply statements were given by Moldova, Russia and Georgia.

With the general debate to continue well into Tuesday it is too early to identify many themes or common threads. One notable development is the prominence given to gender issues which, by comparison, were hardly mentioned at the last Review Conference. As might be expected in light of the geo-political situation, the Ukraine situation was often referred to with many statements describing the Russian allegations about biological research in Ukraine as being groundless. Russia raised numerous points of order claiming that discussion of the invasion of Ukraine was outside the scope of the BWC and used its rights of reply to suggest that only Western states were describing its allegations as groundless. Moldova used its right of reply to clarify it does not take part in political and military meetings of the CIS and so was not party to that group statement.

Side events

There were five side events on Monday – one at breakfast, two at lunchtime and two in the evening. Details are given on the Conference website. As the Review Conference progresses, there will hopefully be more space to report on the side events in these reports.

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Wednesday 30th November 2022

The second day: the general debate and points of order

The second day of the Ninth Review Conference for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) saw the continuation of the plenary exchange of views known as the general debate.

High-level statements were made by the UK and the USA. These were followed by statements from Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Malaysia, Argentina, Spain, United Arab Emirates, Burkina Faso, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Mexico, Poland, Mozambique, Cuba, Norway, Morocco, El Salvador, Namibia, Montenegro, Iran, Hungary, Peru, Venezuela, Ireland, Ukraine, Samoa, Belgium, Holy See, Ecuador, Kenya, Slovakia, Romania, Brazil, State of Palestine, Panama, Qatar, Portugal, Zambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guatemala, Thailand, Bolivia, Niger, South Africa, Jordan and Sudan. Egypt made a statement as a signatory state. This was followed by rights of reply statements from the USA, Russia, Israel and State of Palestine. The Conference then moved on to statements from international organizations and UN agencies: the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, the UN Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, the World Organization for Animal Health, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Interpol and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (partial).

The statement by Ukraine included comments on the military situation there. Four points of order were raised by Russia during this statement, each time with the claim that issues being raised were outside of the remit of the BWC. In response, each time, the President of the Review Conference, Ambassador Leonardo Bencini of Italy, ruled that he wanted to give delegates some flexibility and allow them to develop their arguments to show why what they were raising was relevant to the BWC. At the end of the national statements, the USA used its right of reply to highlight that senior Russian political figures had made remarks claiming to justify the military action because of supposed evidence of components of biological weapons being made in Ukraine. This, the US argued, meant the invasion was relevant to the BWC. In reply, Russia argued that the West was trying to avoid awkward questions about military-sponsored research in Ukraine. The statements by international bodies ran smoothly until NATO spoke of Russian disinformation in relation to Ukraine. Russia raised points of order claiming the rules of procedure did not allow for oral statements from observer organizations. In view of the late hour, the President suggested suspending the meeting to return to this question in the morning. The NATO statement was thus partially presented.

General debate themes

This discussion on themes draws from statements given on Monday and Tuesday and themes are listed in no particular order. Further themes including national implementation, Article VII issues and the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) will be explored in future daily reports.

Universality – As with all BWC meetings there were calls for universal membership of the BWC with reminders that the Convention cannot achieve its overall aims if there is even one state outside of it that might be capable of acquiring or using biological weapons. There were welcoming words for the states parties that had joined

since the last Review Conference and many specific welcomes for Namibia which had joined in 2022. Many statements called for states that were not yet parties to join the Convention.

Article X / cooperation and assistance – This is an issue area where there have been consistent strongly held views with no obvious significant changes in overarching positions from those put forward in earlier meetings. Calls for creation of a cooperation committee were made by those who had previously done so. Issues around capacity building in relation to Article X (and Article VII) were prominent, with some discussion of the challenges of matching needs for assistance with offers. The Cooperation and Assistance Database, commonly known as the ‘Article X database’, was mentioned many times together with suggestions that it would be useful to improve its functionality. The France/Senegal/Togo ‘SecBio’ proposal was highlighted as a way to help implement Article X. There were calls for the addition of a cooperation and assistance officer to the ISU. There seemed to this author to be fewer explicit calls for Article X to be a specific topic in any future inter-sessional work programme but this may simply reflect that most states expect it to be so and therefore focus on calling for other things.

Review of scientific and technological (S&T) developments – No statements disagreed with the idea that there are rapid S&T changes that BWC states parties need to be aware of. Almost all statements referring to S&T issues were explicitly in favour of some form of ongoing systematic review process, notwithstanding some differences in perspectives on how such a process might be structured. Iran, which has had a long-standing focus on cooperation and assistance issues, had a different emphasis, suggesting that any review process for S&T developments within the context of the Convention ‘should have tangible results for developing states’. There were calls for the addition of an S&T officer to the ISU.

Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) – The record number of submissions this year (95 so far) was noted by a number of delegations with a few noting that this was not much more than half of the number of states parties (currently 184). There were calls to improve the number of returns as well as some calls to improve the quality of information provided. Only one substantive suggestion for amending the information submitted was put forward which was by Russia calling for military-funded labs outside the territory of a state party to be reported. Unlike earlier meetings there was little expression of encouragement for states parties to make CBM returns public.

Compliance / verification / proposal for a temporary expert working group – A large number of statements suggested that the BWC would be significantly strengthened if it had some form of compliance measures. Some statements highlighted the US withdrawal from the negotiations for a protocol that had been taking place in the Ad Hoc Group and called specifically for a return to the protocol negotiations. These were consistent with similar statements made over the years. But there were many statements with a somewhat changed tone, including a number of Western states calling for formal compliance measures who had been much more muted in the past when they were aware the US would have opposed progress in this area. There were numerous expressions of support for the temporary expert working group proposal in the Canada/Netherlands working paper. The US statement referred to the need for a better understanding of what was required for an effective understanding of compliance and, for the first time in many Review Conferences, used the term ‘verification measures’ in a positive context.

Side events

There were four side events on Tuesday – two at breakfast and two at lunchtime. Details are provided on the Conference website.

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Thursday 1st December 2022

The third day: NGOs, MSP Chairs and the Committee of the Whole

The Ninth Review Conference for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) continued its work on Wednesday. In normal circumstances the Conference would have carried on with statements from international organizations and UN agencies as part of the general debate. However, the divergence of views on the continuation of those statements expressed at the end of Tuesday's session appeared to remain unresolved on Wednesday. Instead, the informal session for NGO statements was convened before adjourning for the rest of the morning. The afternoon saw a plenary session in which the Chairs of three of the four Meetings of States Parties (MSPs) of the recently completed inter-sessional work programme addressed the Conference to pass on their experiences. This was then followed by the opening of the Committee of the Whole.

NGO statements

Following recent practice, there was a joint statement from some NGOs followed by statements from: Biosecure; Bronic; Council on Strategic Risks; University of Bradford; George Mason University; Hamburg Research Group; Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights; Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security; Center for Biodefense and Global Infectious Diseases; King's College London; VERTIC; and the Center for Biosafety Research and Strategy at Tianjin University. As with statements given in other sessions, where copies of statements are provided by those who delivered them, the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) will place these on the Review Conference website which can be found at <https://meetings.unoda.org/bwc-revcon/biological-weapons-convention-ninth-review-conference-2022>.

The experiences of the MSP Chairs

In introducing this session, President of the Review Conference Ambassador Leonardo Bencini (Italy) noted that the Conference was not starting from scratch but had many inputs it could consider and reminded delegates that the Report of the 2017 MSP had included: 'The Ninth Review Conference will consider the work and outcomes it receives from the Meetings of States Parties and the Meetings of Experts and decide by consensus on any inputs from the intersessional programme and on any further action.'

The Chair of the 2017 MSP, Amandeep Singh Gill (India), noted that the MSP that year had been tasked by the Eighth Review Conference (2016) to aim for consensus on an inter-sessional programme which he described as 'not an easy outcome', but that it had produced a new structure for the work. He highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic had underlined the importance of the inter-sessional work and urged delegates to come together to agree a substantial inter-sessional process from this Review Conference. Ljupčo Gjorgjinski (North Macedonia), Chair of the 2018 MSP, suggested that the work programme had 'accomplished quite a lot on substance, but very little on making effective use of that substance'. He discussed the work on BWC finances that year and used this as an example of how annual political meetings can steer implementation but highlighted that the links between the technical and political meetings were not good. This was also highlighted by Yann Hwang (France), Chair of the 2019 MSP, who reminded delegates of

his *Aide Mémoire*, drawn up in collaboration with the Chairs of the Meetings of Experts (MXs) that year, to collate the proposals made during the 2019 MXs in order to carry forward topics into the 2020 meetings and then onwards to the Ninth Review Conference. Although the publication of this *Aide Mémoire* as an official document was blocked by one delegation without explanation, it was posted on the website of that meeting as CRP.1; he invited delegates to the Review Conference to read it. He suggested that the Chairs of future MSPs could form a Troika in order to provide continuity of leadership. The President informed the Conference that the Chair of the 2020 MSP, Cleopa Mailu (Kenya), had been invited to speak but had been called away for urgent business.

The convening of the panel of past MSP Chairs was an innovation for this Review Conference and appeared to provide useful inputs to delegations.

The Committee of the Whole (CoW)

The CoW convened for its first meeting with Ambassador Tatiana Molcean (Republic of Moldova). The aim of the early meetings of the CoW is to do a ‘first reading’ of the article-by-article review. The first reading is intended to allow a compilation of suggestions without lengthy discussion. Once the compilation has been put together, a ‘second reading’ can be carried out with the advantages and disadvantages of the various suggestions being debated. Owing to clarifications being requested behind the scenes about the proposed roles of the CoW and the Drafting Committee (which is yet to convene), the CoW meeting started with a ‘cross-sectoral’ session to allow the introduction of proposals by delegations that would not have fallen within the article-by-article review. With the questions regarding the Committee roles remaining under discussion, this was a pragmatic solution for maintaining the flow of the substantive work of the Conference. The CoW then moved on to the article-by-article review.

Ambassador Molcean asked for delegations to be ‘precise and concise’ in order to make effective use of time before opening the floor for the cross-sectoral session. All but one of the proposals put forward in this session were contained in working papers that have been published; the other was a proposal from Cuba for which the working paper will be published soon. These proposals will be reported in more detail as they each become the subject of focused discussion.

The article-by-article first reading considered Articles I to III in turn, although one delegation asked for more time to prepare its comments in relation to Article II.

General debate themes (continued)

This continuation of discussion on themes draws from statements given on Monday and Tuesday. Further themes, including national implementation, Article VII issues and financial issues, will be explored in future daily reports.

Implementation Support Unit (ISU) – References to the ISU were made in most statements with many expressions of gratitude for its work. There were suggestions that the ISU could be put on a more permanent footing rather than requiring its mandate to be renewed at each Review Conference. This would allow for improved strategic planning. There were proposals for additions of posts in the form of a science officer and a cooperation officer, with a recognition that these would have resource implications. There were acknowledgements that the tasks allocated to the ISU would be affected by whatever decisions were made for a future inter-sessional process.

Side events

There were four side events on Wednesday – two at breakfast and two at lunchtime. Details are provided on the Conference website.

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Friday 2nd December 2022

The Committee of the Whole continues its first reading

The proceedings of the Ninth Review Conference for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) on Thursday were dedicated to the Committee of the Whole (CoW). Although the indicative programme of work had suggested that the Drafting Committee would be convened for the first time on Thursday after lunch, the CoW continued into the afternoon. Informal interactions with delegates suggest there has been a greater emphasis on the CoW in their minds. In part, this seems to stem from familiarity amongst some delegates with the CoW as they have been reading up about recent Review Conferences in preparation for this one. Similarly there has been some uncertainty stemming from unfamiliarity with the Drafting Committee which has not been convened since the Fifth Review Conference (2001).

The situation with regards to statements from international organizations and UN agencies as part of the general debate appears to remain unresolved.

During the day, the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) informed the Conference that the morning session was the last at this time to be carried by the UN Web TV service owing to cost implications. Those wishing to follow the Conference remotely can receive the live audio stream for each of the official UN languages when meetings are held in public via the UN Listen Live service at <https://listen-live.unog.ch/> – the BWC Review Conference is in Salle XIX. Recordings and automated transcripts of the audio channel in English are available via <https://indico.un.org/event/1001123/page/1018-transcripts-automatic> and the ISU noted that tests are being carried out to create automated transcripts of other official UN languages.

The Committee of the Whole

The CoW met for sessions in both the morning and the afternoon with Ambassador Tatiana Molcean (Republic of Moldova) in the Chair. The ‘first reading’ of the article-by-article review continued through to Article X. While some delegations have been focused on proposals for text for the article-by-article review, there have been interventions that have been on the substance of issues. This is healthy, if time consuming. A particular problem of Review Conferences is that they are carrying out two tasks at the same time – one is to review the operation of the Convention and the other is to negotiate a document that represents that review. The inevitable result is that there are many times that the review of the Convention becomes dominated by a discussion of what particular words might be in the final text rather than truly reviewing the issues themselves.

Once the first reading has been completed, a compilation of suggestions will be circulated. Past practice has been that the compilation is public (either as one file or as a file for each article) and so specific proposals are not highlighted in this report for reasons of space.

General debate themes (continued)

This continuation of discussion on themes draws from statements given on Monday and Tuesday. As before, themes are listed in no particular order.

National implementation – The importance of appropriate national measures to implement the BWC was stressed by many delegations. A number of statements made reference to a specific step forward such as draft legislation being introduced to or passed by the national legislative assembly. While there is widespread recognition that there can be no ‘one size fits all’ approach to national implementation owing to the great variation in national contexts, the benefits for states of drawing on experiences elsewhere were referenced. Many delegations highlighted overlaps or synergies between BWC-related activities at the national level and national implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1540 which deals with preventing non-state actors acquiring WMD-related materials [and which was renewed for 10 years at the Security Council on Wednesday].

Article VII issues – This is the issue area where there is the clearest collective will to achieve progress as all states are aware that the humanitarian consequences of a biological attack on a significant scale would be difficult to respond to with only national resources. Many statements noted a greater awareness of these challenges that were highlighted by the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic. There were many expressions of support for the South African proposal for guidelines on requesting Article VII assistance and for the proposal by France and India for a database to contain offers of capacities that might be utilised in the event of an attack but also offers and requests for capacity building in relation to Article VII. While care has been taken to draw a distinction between the existing Article X database and the proposed Article VII database, a number of statements highlighted the connections between Article VII and Article X issues in areas such as capacity building and providing access to relevant materials. The possibility of establishing a voluntary trust fund to support assistance activities was mentioned a few times. Russia repeated its proposal in relation to deployment of mobile biomedical facilities.

Financial issues – The financial situation for the BWC has been much improved since the Eighth Review Conference (2016), not least because of political attention but also through decisions taken at the 2018 Meeting of States Parties, including the establishment of the Working Capital Fund. There were calls for governments to pay their assessed financial contributions in full and on time in order to sustain the Convention and improvements in this area meant the current level of arrears is substantially lower than six years ago. A number of statements emphasised that if there were going to be significant improvements to the implementation of the BWC at a multilateral level there would need to be the funds available to support them, whether this was for additional meeting time or for additional staff.

Inter-sessional work programme – Many delegations spoke of the importance of the work between Review Conferences and of benefits of holding annual political meetings. There is much less common ground when it comes to the specifics of what else might be included. Elements of what might be within a work programme have been described in other themes in these reports – examples include a review of scientific and technological (S&T) developments, a temporary experts working group on compliance issues, a review of Confidence-Building Measures, and Article X cooperation and assistance issues. Each of these areas, and other proposals being presented, has their advocates and it will be a key task of the Review Conference to accommodate the variety of perspectives taking into account both political and financial aspects. One divergence of views is on whether annual meetings could amend what was being considered in the work programme and whether they could take substantive decisions.

Side events

There were two side events on Thursday – one at breakfast and one at lunchtime. Details are provided on the Conference website.

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Monday 5th December 2022

CoW first reading complete and Schrödinger's Committee convenes

The Ninth Review Conference for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) concluded its first week of proceedings with a committee that both existed but didn't exist at the same time. During the morning, the Committee of the Whole (CoW) completed its first reading of what might be in the article-by-article review. The CoW was followed by a short plenary called by the President to decide the way forward for the Review Conference. The number of working papers published is now 47.

The situation with regard to statements from international organizations and UN agencies as part of the general debate appears to have been parked for the time being owing to the challenges of finding a solution.

The Committee of the Whole

The CoW met to complete its first reading during the morning with Ambassador Tatiana Molcean (Republic of Moldova) in the Chair, continuing from Article X which had been reached on Thursday. Most suggestions brought forward were in line with positions presented in the general debate. While many proposals for text to be added or taken away from what had been in the final document from the Eighth Review Conference were specific, there were others that were more general that would require specific text to be developed. There were also cross-cutting issues, such as gender, where there were proposals made under a number of articles. A number of proposals were in line with working papers submitted, some of which had specific proposed language within them. At the time of writing it was not clear when the compilation of suggestions from the first reading would be ready for all delegates.

Plenary on the way forward for the Review Conference

The President of the Review Conference, Ambassador Leonardo Bencini (Italy), informed delegates of further nominations of office holders, including vice-chairs of committees, which were then approved. [A collated list of office holders will be given in a future report in this series.] On the way forward, Ambassador Bencini outlined his suggestion for the Drafting Committee to look at the forward-looking part of the final document and emphasised that all states parties could participate in its deliberations on an equal footing. He spoke of efficiency, transparency, speed and inclusiveness as watchwords for how he saw the Committee operating. Iran questioned whether substantive issues should be dealt with in the Drafting Committee as it interpreted the rules of procedure as the CoW having this role. Russia highlighted that rule 36 spoke of texts being referred to the Drafting Committee by the Conference and that this had not happened. Most delegations taking the floor supported the President's proposal to convene the Drafting Committee. Following consultations over the lunch break, a compromise was reached.

Schrödinger's Committee

The compromise reached was that an informal plenary would be held with Sara Lindegren (the Chair of the Drafting Committee) presiding. This informal plenary could put together a basic text to be sent to a formal plenary and then on to the Drafting Committee, enabling

the latter to be convened formally. Very clear signals were given that this was not the Drafting Committee, even though the session was being chaired by the Chair of the Drafting Committee and considering the business that had been allocated to the Drafting Committee. In summary, it was both not the Drafting Committee and the Drafting Committee at the same time, hence ‘Schrödinger’s Committee’ was born. A consequence of the compromise was that everyone who was not a member of a state party delegation was required to leave the room and the proceedings continued behind closed doors, notwithstanding that there have been many informal plenaries that had been held in open session in earlier Review Conferences. That these proceedings were held in a closed box that was unopened to the world only strengthened the Schrödinger analogy.

The informal plenary heard from the facilitators who described how they saw the issue areas they were dealing with, having each had opportunities for preliminary discussions with delegates. There was an exchange of views with some discussion of issues where delegates suggested that they weren’t opposed to particular ideas but that ‘the time was not yet ripe’ for them. [The concept of unripe time has a long history within the BWC!] As this exchange of views was held just before the weekend, it provided delegates and office holders a chance to develop their thinking before proceedings resume in the second week.

Side events

There were six side events on Friday – three at breakfast and three at lunchtime. Details are provided on the Conference website.

Some reflections on the first week

A conscious effort is taken in writing these daily summaries to report as objectively as possible. However, there are times that this style of reporting does not convey some of the atmosphere of meetings. The following are some personal reflections that do not necessarily represent anyone’s views other than the author’s own.

The general atmosphere of this Review Conference is positive, with a much more diverse representation than before in terms of gender and age.

There seems to be significantly greater convergence of perspectives around a number of previously difficult issue areas such as verification and the enhancement of Article X than there has been at other recent Review Conferences. It would be a tragedy if such convergence could not be used as the foundation for substantive progress for the BWC. Even with a greater convergence of perspectives, there are still many details to be fleshed out. There will be numerous challenges for delegations who have to reach judgements on whether the advantages they get from advances in the issues they want to pursue outweigh the disadvantages in accepting those parts they are less in favour of. Nevertheless, the majority of states parties seem to be agreeing on a core set of substantive issues and on where some of the trade-offs may be. Perhaps the most unpredictable element at this stage within the Review Conference is that the geo-political tensions are significant and generate uncertainties that raise concerns that consensus will be difficult to reach at the end of the Conference.

The ejection from the conference room of the non-governmental organizations and others who were not representing states parties on Friday afternoon was reminiscent of BWC meetings two decades ago. It used to be the United States who would call for meetings to be held in private. At the time, Iran and Russia, amongst others, would hint that the US was taking that position because it wanted to reduce scrutiny after its rejection of the negotiations for a verification protocol in 2001. It will be interesting to see how the actions by the latest countries to reduce the openness of BWC meetings are perceived by those at a distance from the Conference.

This is the sixth report from the Ninth BWC Review Conference (28 November-16 December 2022). These reports have been produced for all BWC meetings with NGO registration since the Sixth Review Conference (2006) by the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP). They are available from <<https://www.bwpp.org/reports.html>> and <<https://www.cbw-events.org.uk/bwc-rep.html>>. A subscription link is available on each webpage. Financial support for these reports has been gratefully received from Global Affairs Canada. The reports are written by Richard Guthrie, CBW Events, who is solely responsible for their contents <richard@cbw-events.org.uk>.

Tuesday 6th December 2022

Into the second week: a first look at the Solemn Declaration

The Ninth Review Conference for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) started its second week with a brief plenary. The Committee of the Whole (CoW), meeting in public, took a first look at the Solemn Declaration. The rest of the working time was used by the informal plenary preparing for the Drafting Committee which met behind closed doors. The official BWC website for the Review Conference, which can be found at <https://meetings.unoda.org/bwc-revcon/biological-weapons-convention-ninth-review-conference-2022>, contains official documents, copies of statements delivered and information on side events. The number of working papers on the site is now 50.

Brief plenary

The brief plenary heard that the nomination of Brazil had been received for the last position for Vice-President of the Conference. This was agreed to and means that there is now a full roster of office holders for the Review Conference. The President of the Review Conference, Ambassador Leonardo Bencini (Italy), stressed that his intention was to try to follow the published programme of work which has the CoW and the Drafting Committee meeting in alternating sessions to work on the parts of the final document they had been allocated [the structure of the document is described below]. He noted that the initial compilation of suggestions of what might be in the article-by-article review was sent out by email to delegates late on Sunday and bears the document reference BWC/CONF.IX/COW/INF.1 [past practice has been that this document is put on the Conference website and assurances have been received that the same practice will be followed this year but there has been a technical delay]. Ambassador Bencini stated his aim was to have a consolidated draft of the final document by the end of this week. Finally, he announced the return of the ‘Bowling World Cup’ – the alternative BWC – which will take place on Thursday evening.

The Committee of the Whole – Solemn declaration

The CoW met after the plenary to hold a short session to take a first look at the Solemn Declaration with Ambassador Tatiana Molcean (Republic of Moldova) in the Chair. As its starting point, the CoW took the text from the Eighth Review Conference (2016) which had been adopted by consensus. There are two perspectives that are regularly expressed about the Solemn Declaration – one is that this is the overarching political declaration from the Review Conference, the other that it contains the preambular paragraphs to the article-by-article review. A number of suggestions for changes were proposed without debate.

Schrödinger’s Committee continues

The Drafting Committee that isn’t the Drafting Committee continued its work for the last hour of the morning work session and continued into the afternoon, with Sara Lindgren (Sweden) in the Chair. There were further exchanges of views and the team of facilitators

indicated they were preparing a non-paper to put together elements for the forward-looking part of the final document. While not a formal facilitator, Tancredi Francese (Italy), a member of the Presidential team, has been focused on facilitating discussions on the future inter-sessional work programme.

The structure of the final document

The structure of BWC Review Conference final documents has had two phases. The original was up until the Fifth Review Conference (2001 & 2002) before a new structure was adopted at the Sixth Review Conference (2006). The new structure happened in part because the Fifth Review Conference had been unable to agree a final document in accordance with the BWC's previous practice and this provided the chance to create a new format more suitable to the needs of the BWC at the following Review Conference.

The final documents adopted since 2006 have started with a part titled: 'I. Organization and work of the Conference', often referred to as the 'procedural report'. It is largely uncontroversial as it simply describes the practical aspects of the Conference – when the Conference met, which delegations attended, who were the office holders, etc. The draft of this part is prepared by the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) and is usually circulated only a few days before the end of the Review Conference owing to there being little to discuss as it is almost entirely factual.

The next part is 'II. Final Declaration' which has two sections – the Solemn Declaration and the article-by-article review. The Solemn Declaration is not titled as such in the final document and appears before the article-by-article section. The intention of Part II is to be a review of past activities and is usually the subject of a drawn-out negotiation process to get a text all delegations can agree on.

The third part within the structure is 'III. Decisions and recommendations' and is often referred to as the 'forward-looking' part. It is this part that includes sub-sections such as the details of any inter-sessional work programme, the mandate of the ISU, and so forth. Having said this, practice has been that the first sub-section has consistently been about the previous inter-sessional programme. As with part II, this is usually the subject of a drawn-out negotiation process. As with most multilateral negotiations, 'nothing is agreed until everything is agreed' and so the negotiations for parts II and III are linked.

Final documents also have annexes such as the agenda, rules of procedure and a list of the documents of the Conference. As with part I, these are mostly factual or are copies of documents agreed at the beginning of the Conference so require little discussion in normal circumstances. One exception was that the final document of the Seventh Review Conference (2011) contained an additional annex on the revised forms for submission of Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) agreed upon that year.

Each of the last three final documents – 2006, 2011 and 2016 – have included some repetition as time was short. It was better to use the available time to resolve any outstanding issues rather than neaten up the text. This may also apply during the negotiations of the final document this time.

Side events

There were three side events on Monday. At breakfast, Russia hosted a 'Briefing on the outcomes of the Consultative meeting initiated by the Russian Federation under Article V of the BTWC'. There were two events at lunchtime: Germany hosted a briefing on 'The German Biosecurity Programme'; and Russia held a reception to launch an exhibition 'The 100-year anniversary of the Russian State Sanitary and Epidemiological Service: A century on guard of health and well-being' which will be available for delegates to view for the coming week.

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Wednesday 7th December 2022

CoW second reading starts and elements non-paper considered

Proceedings on Tuesday for the Ninth Review Conference for the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) saw the Committee of the Whole (CoW), meeting in public, start to go through the compilation of suggestions for the article-by-article review. The informal plenary preparing for the Drafting Committee met again in private. There was a brief report from the Chair of the Credentials Committee.

The Committee of the Whole – second reading

The CoW met during the morning with Ambassador Tatiana Molcean (Republic of Moldova) in the Chair to start the ‘second reading’ of the article-by-article review which involves working through the compilation of suggestions. An updated version of the compilation has been produced as document BWC/CONF.IX/COW/INF.2 which incorporates the proposals contained in document INF.1 into the text of the final declaration of the Eighth Review Conference. Both documents are now on the official Conference website at <https://meetings.unoda.org/bwc-revcon/biological-weapons-convention-ninth-review-conference-2022>.

There were some comments noting the duplication of suggestions for most articles calling for them to be properly implemented and whether some space could be saved by inserting an overarching comment about all articles at the same time.

Much of the discussion regarding *Article I* focused on scope, on use, or on implementation. On scope, many delegations considered that the text from the Eighth Review Conference was sufficient to cover all scientific developments while others supported suggested changes that highlighted particular aspects of such developments. As ‘use’ does not appear in the text of the article it is not explicitly prohibited under the Convention. This has been argued by some to be a significant weakness and the Fourth Review Conference (1996) declared that use is implicitly prohibited by the Convention, a declaration repeated at each Conference since. Part of the logic for this is that use would rely on possession of prohibited items and therefore the use of biological weapons would fall within the prohibitions of Article I. One suggestion that attracted much attention was to add that the Conference would condemn threat of use as well as use within the Article I review. A suggestion about a legally-binding protocol being the best way to ensure implementation of this Article attracted diverging views.

[Historical note: Use had been explicitly included in the original (July 1969) and revised (August 1969 & August 1970) UK drafts on a prohibition on biological warfare that kick-started the negotiations towards the BWC. The US-Soviet joint draft (August 1971) that, with a few amendments, became the BWC did not include use. There appears to have been two threads of argument that had led to this. One was questioning whether the new body of international law relating to arms control and disarmament should impinge on the laws of war (an argument very much of its time). The other was whether including use in the BWC would weaken the role of the 1925 Geneva Protocol, especially as the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons in the latter was seen as needing to be preserved as there was no immediate prospect of a chemical weapons convention – that was only agreed two decades years later. In August 1971, UK

Ambassador Henry Hainworth, with the support of many other delegations, forcefully urged the reintroduction of use as a prohibition but this did not overcome the resistance of the USA and USSR before the BWC text was finalized in September 1971.]

There was only a brief discussion of the suggestions for *Article II*, much of which focused on what new states parties might be encouraged to declare in terms of intentions not to pursue biological weapons.

On *Article III*, a number of the suggestions, and interventions about them, focused on export control issues. The balance of obligations for each state party to ensure it does not assist others in the acquisition of biological weapons while at the same time to ensure fullest possible access to materials and technologies for peaceful purposes under Article X has long been the subject of discussion.

Credentials Committee

The proceedings of the CoW were paused at around noon to allow for a brief plenary so that a report could be given by Angus September (South Africa), the Chair of the Credentials Committee. He reported that a number of delegations had not yet supplied originals of their formal credentials and these delegations were urged to supply their credentials as soon as possible. This call was echoed by the President. The role of Credentials Committees at multilateral conferences is sometimes perceived as an almost mundane administrative process. However, there is an important purpose in checking that those present and participating in decision making have the relevant authority to be doing so. Without confidence in that authority there might, one day at some conference on some subject, be doubt in the legitimacy of the decisions.

Schrödinger's Committee

The informal plenary that is and is not the Drafting Committee met during the afternoon, with Sara Lindegren (Sweden) in the Chair. A major focus for discussion was a non-paper by the facilitators on elements that might be included in the forward-looking part of the final document. This elements paper is more developed than equivalents seen at this stage of previous BWC Review Conferences. This may have positive benefits in allowing earlier discussion on the overall shape of the forward-looking part; but it may also allow earlier criticism of the overall package. The terms 'balanced' and 'package' carry with them significant political baggage but the underlying concept that what is needed for the final outcome of the Conference is a balanced package of proposals provides some clarity to the discussions. There has to be enough in the collection of elements for everyone to support what appears in the final document. Expressed positions during the Tuesday session became firmer. The element most vocally supported by the majority of delegations, a science & technology (S&T) review process, was strongly criticised in at least one intervention. Past practice has been that revised elements papers are introduced.

Side events

There were three side events on Monday. At breakfast, the Nuclear Threat Initiative Global Biological Policy and Programs hosted a briefing on 'Safeguarding Bioscience and Biotechnology: IBBIS and the International Common Mechanism for DNA Synthesis Screening'. There were two events at lunchtime: the Global Partnership, the Africa Center for Disease Control and the BWC ISU convened a briefing on 'Supporting the universalization and effective implementation of the BWC in Africa' which updated the Conference on activities of the Signature Initiative; and Control Arms held a virtual briefing on 'Regulating Transit and Transshipment Across Weapons of Mass Destruction and Conventional Weapons – What has worked, what are the challenges and what is the way forward?'

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Thursday 8th December 2022

The article-by-article review: second reading continues

Proceedings on Wednesday for the Ninth Review Conference for the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) saw the Committee of the Whole (CoW), meeting in public, continuing to work on the article-by-article review. The focus on the CoW on Wednesday did not mean that other work stopped. Facilitators and office holders in the Drafting Committee could be seen consulting with delegates in the room.

The Committee of the Whole – second reading

The Chair of the CoW, Ambassador Tatiana Molcean (Republic of Moldova), delegated Vice-Chair Andreas Bilgeri (Austria) to preside over the morning session before returning to Chair the afternoon session. The CoW continued with the ‘second reading’ of the article-by-article review which involves working through the compilation of suggestions that had been received. The day started with the remainder of points made on Article III and ended with Article VII still under discussion. Many paragraphs that had been suggested for adding to the review were placed more accurately rather than at the end of the section for each article. There was some streamlining of text and elimination of duplication of some suggestions.

The discussion under *Article III* continued in the same style as it had on Wednesday with a focus on export control issues and the balance of obligations between Article III and Article X.

Article IV deals with national implementation. Discussion reflected concerns that implementation at the national level needed to be effective without being burdensome. The relationship between the BWC and UN Security Council resolution 1540 was the subject of divergent views as was the relationship between national implementation and verification. Previously stated positions on voluntary transparency measures were repeated with some delegations wanting the benefits that they perceived in such arrangements to be reflected in the review while others wanted to downplay these on the basis they see them as a distraction from comprehensive verification arrangements. There was broad support for the suggestions for inclusion of language on gender, although one delegation indicated it did not see this as a priority.

The discussion on *Article V* focused on two areas – consultations and on Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs). There were many interventions supporting the suggestion that the Formal Consultative Meeting (FCM) convened during the year should be reported in a factual manner with many delegations drawing attention to the language in the draft resolution from the First Committee on the BWC [which, by coincidence, was formally adopted by the UN General Assembly without a vote on Wednesday so has become a UNGA resolution]. There was some opposition to the proposal to add reporting of laboratories outside of national territory to the CBM system. The status of the commitment to submit CBM returns was once again the subject of debate with some interventions in support of using the word ‘voluntary’ in the review while others suggested that as the CBM arrangements derive from consensus decisions by Review Conferences this should be reflected as a political commitment to submit returns.

Article VI deals with complaints to the UN Security Council. There were many calls for the formal request this year to the Security Council under this Article to be reported in a factual manner in a similar way to the suggested use of language from the draft resolution from the First Committee on the BWC for the FCM under Article V. [Note: the First Committee draft resolution does not refer to what happened in the Security Council as that meeting was held on 27 October while the First Committee text had been agreed on 14 October.] A number of delegations highlighted the possible use of the UN Secretary-General's mechanism for investigating alleged breaches of the 1925 Geneva Protocol as an independent tool. This, amongst other things, prompted questions of whether the BWC was empowered to recommend to the Security Council how it might act on receipt of a request. [Note: some of these issues were flagged within the BWC negotiations during which it was agreed that once the Convention was opened for signature there would be an 'accompanying resolution' submitted to the Security Council through which it would decide to accept requests from the BWC. However, the accompanying resolution was never submitted owing to geo-political challenges prevailing at the time.] One of the text suggestions calls for an investigation capability within the BWC itself, the motivation for which was the perception that the Security Council was not an independent body. There was some discussion as to whether states parties wanting to call for an investigation into alleged use of biological or toxin weapons had options other than going through the Security Council.

As discussion of *Article VII* is scheduled to continue on Thursday, reporting of this Article will be held over until the next daily report.

At the end of the afternoon, the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) announced that additional suggestions for text would be produced as addenda to the existing BWC/CONF.IX/COW/INF.1 and INF.2 documents. Both INF.1 and INF.2 are available on the official Conference website at <https://meetings.unoda.org/bwc-revcon/biological-weapons-convention-ninth-review-conference-2022> and presumably the Add.1 documents will be posted there too. There are now 51 working papers published on the official Conference website.

Side events

There were two side events on Wednesday. At breakfast, the Nuclear Threat Initiative Global Biological Policy and Programs hosted a briefing on 'A Joint Assessment Mechanism for High-Consequence Biological Events of Unknown Origin'. At lunchtime, the delegation of China, Tianjin University and London Metropolitan University convened a briefing on 'Biological Security Education in Support of the Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Scientists'.

Erratum: the side events listed in the last daily report were those that took place on Tuesday, despite the sentence saying Monday – the perils of overnight writing! *Mea culpa.*

Jo Husbands – in memoriam

Sad news filtered through to the Review Conference that Jo Husbands of the US National Academies and of the Inter Academy Panel passed away last week. She was a regular participant in BWC meetings and was perhaps the key player in the formation of the 2005 IAP Biosecurity Guidelines which were the culmination of years of work in this field. As one colleague observed: 'She was responsible for inspiring, informing and uniting a diverse community of individuals around the world working across political fault lines and cultural differences to lay the foundations for thinking around contemporary chemical and biological security governance'. Friends, scholars and policy makers shall miss her.

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Friday 9th December 2022

Bowled over at the Ninth BWC Review Conference

The second Thursday at the Ninth Review Conference for the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) saw further work behind closed doors by the informal plenary that is pretending not to be the Drafting Committee and the Committee of the Whole (CoW), meeting in public, nearly completing its second reading of the article-by-article review. The evening saw the revival of the alternative BWC – the ‘Bowling World Cup’.

Schrödinger’s Committee

The informal plenary that is and is not the Drafting Committee met in closed session during the morning with Sara Lindegren (Sweden) presiding. From what has been said of the proceedings there has been much repetition with what is being said by delegations in the CoW. Work continues on the basis of the elements paper prepared by the facilitators. One significant point was a desire by some states to provide greater stability to the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) by giving it a mandate of an open duration rather than being renewed each Review Conference. This was blocked on the basis that the ISU should be replaced whenever a legally-binding measure to strengthen the BWC is adopted.

The Committee of the Whole – second reading

The CoW met in the afternoon with Ambassador Tatiana Molcean (Republic of Moldova) in the Chair. The CoW continued with the ‘second reading’ of the article-by-article review which involves working through the compilation of suggestions that had been received. The day started with the remainder of points made on Article VII and ended with the last group of articles under discussion.

Article VII deals with assistance in cases of breaches of the Convention and continued from Wednesday so reporting here includes interventions made on that day. There was much convergence of perspectives on this article. There was an emphasis from a number of delegations that any assistance would have to be prompt. The proposal to endorse guidelines for the process of requesting assistance under this article received wide support, although no specific language had been put forward this was expected soon. There was general support for the proposal for an Article VII database but some questions raised as to whether it should be mentioned in this part of the final document as any decision to establish it would be in the forward-looking part. Questions about database financing were also raised. There was support for reference(s) to be made to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic under this article with further suggestions that this might also include other diseases that have become sources of recent public health concern such as Zika and Monkeypox.

Article VIII states that nothing in the BWC ‘shall be interpreted as in any way limiting or detracting from’ obligations under the 1925 Geneva Protocol. Many interventions supported text calling for states that had not done so to join the Protocol, especially BWC states parties. Suggested text naming the six accessions to the Geneva Protocol accepted by France as depositary since the last BWC Review Conference prompted a divergence of views as not all of them are recognised as states by some BWC

states parties. [Note: there are similar issues arising for other parts of the draft final document on whether new BWC states parties should be listed.] Previous Review Conferences have described the maintenance of reservations to the Geneva Protocol relating to response with anything prohibited under the BWC to be incompatible with the Convention. Language reiterating this was broadly supported. France, as depositary, indicated that Bahrain had withdrawn its reservation since the last Review Conference.

As *Article IX* calls for negotiations on a Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) which was achieved in the 1990s some discussion under this article reflected divergences of views in relation to the CWC. There are textual suggestions for joint activities between the BWC and CWC through states parties and these prompted responses highlighting the separation of the two Conventions.

Article X is about access to the life sciences for peaceful purposes and has long been the article for which the divergence of views has been most significant. However, the debate has moved on and has become more practical over the years, with a much greater emphasis on capacity building and other cooperation and assistance activities. Many interventions referred to the Article X database with many noting that this had not been as useful as had been expected when it was established by the Seventh Review Conference (2011). Some noted that the BWC ISU was under-resourced to support this and tasks such as helping with providing better details for offers and requests could be supported through the addition of a cooperation officer within the ISU. Some text suggestions include calls for a cooperation committee which prompted negative comments from other delegations. A proposal for a voluntary fund to support Article X activities gained some traction, but also raised questions of how decisions might be made to select activities to be financially supported. The importance of input from review of scientific and technological (S&T) developments for implementation of Article X was noted.

As with the first reading, Articles XI, XII and XIV were grouped together for discussion. As the discussion on these three articles was ongoing at the close of business, reporting on them will be held over.

Side events

There were three side events on Thursday. At breakfast, the European Union, Japan, the Philippines, Lao PDR and the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) hosted a briefing on 'Efforts to strengthen the implementation of the BWC in Southeast Asia'. There were two events at lunchtime. The German Federal Foreign Office and the Robert Koch Institute convened a briefing on 'Activities to support the United Nations Secretary-General's Mechanism'. The Biosafety Association for Central Asia and Caucasus (BACAC) and the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence held a virtual briefing on 'BACAC Conference "Covid-19 Lessons Learned" impact of a pandemic on BWC'.

Bowled over (again!)

Thursday evening saw a further revival of the alternative BWC – the 'Bowling World Cup' with a large number of delegates heading across Geneva for a light-hearted ten-pin bowling competition hosted by Italy and Switzerland. The tradition had started in the 1990s and had been continued during various BWC meetings until the political stalemates of 2001. The tradition was revived at the Sixth Review Conference (2006) and at the Eighth (2016). In December 2019, the trophy for the Bowling World Cup was returned to Geneva, having been resting in a cupboard at the US Department of State.

The winner of the 2022 Bowling World Cup with the highest individual score was Barbara Hemmerle (BWC ISU) with runners up Igor Kucer (European Union) and Jelle Honing (Netherlands).

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