
Working Group on the Strengthening of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

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Identifying, examining and developing specific and effective measures, including possible legally-binding measures, and making recommendations to strengthen and institutionalize the Convention in all its aspects within the mandate of the Working Group

Reducing Biological Risks by Promoting the Peaceful Use of Biology: Final update on activities*

Submitted by Norway

I. Introduction

1. In 2021, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided a voluntary contribution of NOK 3,300,000 to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) to support activities within the framework of Article X of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) with the aim of enhancing its implementation. The overall aims were to provide assistance to developing countries and to foster cooperation on issues relating to the implementation of Article X. The voluntary contribution expires at the end of 2024 so this document serves to summarise the activities supported since the previous summary contained in document [BWC/MSP/2023/WP.5](#).

II. Aims and structure

2. The objectives of the activities were as follows:

- (a) Strengthen implementation of the BWC, particularly Article X, in developing countries;
- (b) Support efforts to build capacity and knowledge relating to humanitarian and developmental perspectives of the BWC;
- (c) Strengthen developing countries' expertise and capacity to fulfil their obligations under the BWC and foster South-South cooperation in this regard;
- (d) Support efforts to promote biological safety and security and peaceful use of biological sciences in developing countries; and
- (e) Promote disarmament by strengthening the capacity of relevant international and multilateral organizations and support efforts in the areas of humanitarian relief and social and economic development.

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



3. The activities were divided into four main categories:
 - (a) Building human capacities through South-South cooperation;
 - (b) Support for the BWC Assistance and Cooperation Database;
 - (c) Article X in the context of the Ninth BWC Review Conference; and
 - (d) Support for the translation of a Guide to implementing the BWC in six official United Nation languages.
4. This working paper summarises the activities carried during 2024 and it also presents the overall lessons learnt from the implementation of the activities.

III. Implementation

Building human capacities through South-South cooperation

5. From 4 to 8 March 2024, the BWC Implementation Support Unit, together with [The World Academy of Sciences \(TWAS\)](#), the [InterAcademy Partnership \(IAP\)](#), and the [International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology \(ICGEB\)](#), organized a joint capacity-building course on science diplomacy, biosecurity and virus detection in the framework of Article X in Trieste, Italy. This capacity-building course included an introduction to the BWC, as well as sessions on the relationship between science and diplomacy, biosecurity in low-resource settings and modern virus detection methods. The course was designed to enhance the promotion of biological sciences and technologies for peaceful purposes through South-South cooperation.

6. Fourteen participants, including seven women, from 14 developing countries (Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Thailand, Türkiye, Uganda and Uzbekistan), all from the list of [OECD's DAC List of ODA Recipients in 2024](#), participated in the course. These participants, mainly mid-career professionals with backgrounds in molecular biology, microbiology, and human and animal health representing national research or academic institutes dealing with disease outbreaks, were selected from a pool of more than eight hundred applicants. Course instructors also included experts from the Global South.

7. Side event Meeting on 'Reducing Biological Risks by Promoting the Peaceful Use of Biology' on 12 December 2023, during the 2023 Meeting of States Parties (MSP).

8. Side event Meeting on 'Reducing Biological Risks by Promoting the Peaceful Use of Biology' on 23 August 2024, during the fourth session of the BWC Working Group on the Strengthening of the Convention, 23 August 2024.

Support for the BWC Assistance and Cooperation Database

9. The voluntary contribution from Norway also facilitated the recruitment of a part-time consultant by the ISU to update the BWC Assistance and Cooperation Database. The updating process, which included contacting States Parties to validate or revise their offers and/or requests for assistance, has resulted in a Database containing a valid pool of offers and requests with detailed descriptions of the offers, the rationale for the request, the expected results, the nature of the requests, etc. The validated offers and requests, combined with an initiative to reach out to States Parties, has increased the visibility of the Database which also provides an opportunity for effective matchmaking. As of 31 October 2024, the Database contained 28 offers of assistance from 12 States Parties and 74 requests for assistance from 27 States Parties.

IV. Lessons Learned

10. Through capacity-building and partnerships, the activities supported by Norway have contributed to raising awareness about the BWC and promoting biosecurity and the peaceful uses of biology. This contribution is an example of what States Parties can do to support the

implementation of Article X of the Convention. It leveraged the expertise and capacity of the ICGEB to provide training and networking opportunities for participants from developing countries. These activities could be expanded and implemented at regional level in support of cooperation in life sciences and technologies for peaceful purposes.

11. Feedback from the ICGEB, the trainers and the participants emphasised that while the short duration of the training courses helped to raise awareness, they were not long enough for participants to develop new skills and competencies that could be used upon their return to their respective institutions. Based on this feedback, Norway, as part of a new voluntary contribution, is planning to launch a pilot two-month fellowship programme on "Biosciences for Peaceful Purposes and Biosecurity" for experts from developing countries. This new fellowship programme, which will run in 2025 and 2026, will complement the virus detection and biosecurity training courses organised in partnership with the ICGEB.

12. Based on feedback from the side events organized in 2023 and 2024, as well as lessons learned from related activities such as [Global Partnership Initiated Biosecurity Academia for Controlling Health Threats \(GIBACHT\)](#), in order to increase the impact of the project in the participating countries, greater emphasis should be placed on identifying institutions in developing countries that need further human capital development to fulfill their mission. This approach will ensure that the participants selected for training are from the relevant institutions and will have the opportunity to use their newly-acquired skills. BWC National Contact Points (NCPs) could play an important role in this respect. The NCPs can coordinate a process to identify national priorities for biosecurity and capacity building in life sciences, thereby ensuring that participation in these activities benefits the right entities and has the intended impact. This is also essential for implementing future capacity-building projects under the international cooperation and assistance mechanism, should it be established by States Parties.

13. Capacity-building in biosecurity related issues constitutes 60% of the registered assistance offers and requests in the Assistance and Cooperation Database. The activities supported by Norway also underlined the potential synergies between Article VII and Article X of the BWC where effective implementation of Article X could boost States Parties' capacities for national preparedness and response capabilities.

14. The training activities supported by Norway included hands-on laboratory exercises, lectures, role-playing scenarios and table-top exercises. Gender parity was considered in the trainees' selection and the training team's composition. Sixty-nine participants of which thirty-two women (46%), from thirty-six States Parties participated in the various activities. In addition to the consideration given to the gender dimension, the participants were evenly selected among least developed countries (33.3%), lower-middle-income countries (33.3%), and upper-middle-income countries (33.3%), based on the OECD's DAC List of ODA Recipients in 2024.

V. Conclusion

15. Following the success of the activities described above and in document BWC/MSP/2023/WP.5, Norway will continue to support capacity development initiatives for developing countries within the framework of Article X of the Convention, with an increased focus on advancing biosecurity and biology for peaceful purposes. Norway's experience and lessons learned from the implementation of capacity-building activities under Article X in recent years provide tangible insights that could be of great value to the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Convention as it considers establishing an international cooperation and assistance mechanism.

16. Norway expresses its appreciation to the BWC ISU, the ICGEB, and all those who have contributed to the successful implementation of its capacity-building activities under Article X. Norway believes that these activities have contributed significantly to a deeper understanding of the requirements for strengthening the implementation of Article X and thus

to promoting the use of biological science and technologies for peaceful purposes under the BWC.
