

Monday 9th February 2026

The Eighth Session of the BWC Working Group: setting the scene

The Eighth Session of the Working Group (WG) on the strengthening of the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) is scheduled to convene in Geneva from 9 to 13 February 2026. The Chair of the WG is Ambassador Frederico S Duque Estrada Meyer (Brazil) with Ambassador Anne Lazar-Sury (France) and Irakli Jgenti (Georgia) as Vice-Chairs.

Proceedings for public meetings will be video streamed via UN WebTV at <https://media.un.org/en/webtv/> and audio streamed via Listen Live at <https://listen-live.unog.ch/en/index.html>

Official documents and other materials, including details of side events, are being posted by the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) to the official web page of the Eighth Session which can be found at <https://meetings.unoda.org/meeting/79376/>

Background to the Working Group

The WG was established by the Ninth BWC Review Conference (2022) to examine measures under seven specific topics listed in paragraph 8 of part II of its final report. These are: (a) international cooperation and assistance (ICA) under Article X; (b) scientific and technological (S&T) developments relevant to the BWC; (c) confidence-building and transparency; (d) compliance and verification; (e) national implementation of the Convention; (f) assistance, response and preparedness under Article VII; and (g) organizational, institutional and financial arrangements. The Review Conference also proposed two mechanisms should be established – on S&T review and on ICA/Article X – with the relevant paragraphs (paragraphs 18 and 19 respectively) including the wording: ‘In order for this mechanism to be established, the Working Group on the strengthening of the Convention will make appropriate recommendations.’

The agreement on the WG mandate marked a significant step forward in the potential to strengthen the Convention after previous inconclusive processes; the most notable of which had been negotiations for a legally-binding protocol to strengthen the BWC which had started in the 1990s and which were brought to a halt in 2001.

The Ninth Review Conference was explicit in encouraging the WG to complete its work, if possible, before the end of 2025 – the centenary year of the signing of the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the 50th anniversary of entry into force of the BWC. To the frustration of many delegates, clearly in the majority, it was not possible to keep to this timetable. Hence the convening of WG8 at relatively short notice, barely two months after WG7, in order to maintain momentum. The convening of WG8 means that the session pencilled in for the middle of the year will now be one working week instead of two. WG9 is scheduled for 17-21 August, with WG10 scheduled for 7-11 December to be followed by the annual Meeting of States Parties (MSP) on 14-16 December. The Tenth Review Conference is due to be held in 2027 during dates yet to be decided. Many delegates have indicated that the sooner the WG can adopt a decision by consensus, the sooner it would be possible to move towards implementation by using the remaining available dates to move the process forward.

The draft decision for adoption by the Working Group

The Chair has continued to work on a draft decision document for adoption by the WG which has been circulated in a number of iterations as the document has developed. The draft evolved out of the efforts to produce a ‘rolling text’, a version of which was circulated at the Sixth Session that itself was based on the work done by the Friends of the Chair (FoCs) on the different issue areas. Versions of the draft decision document have been discussed at WG7 and have been the subject of numerous informal consultations meaning that the process has had the widest possible range of inputs.

The Seventh Session of the WG produced a multi-coloured version of the draft decision document which included additional changes that were agreed by delegations in the discussions carried out in the days not used by the 2025 Meeting of States Parties (MSP) after WG7 had concluded its previously scheduled work.

In the time between WG7 and WG8 the Chair distributed another version which was subject to further consultations. During the weekend before WG8, the Chair distributed a new version bearing the symbol [BWC/WG/8/CRP.1/Rev.1](#) – although this is a formal document number, conference room papers (CRPs) are not usually posted on the UN documents server (<https://documents.un.org/>) and so the latest (and any subsequent) draft would need to be downloaded from the WG8 website listed above.

The colour scheme for CRP.1/Rev.1 of WG8 is that the text agreed at WG7 is highlighted in green. Text agreed during the informal consultations held after this is highlighted in yellow. Text yet to be agreed remains unhighlighted. There are some proposals made by delegations that have not been agreed upon and these are indicated using square brackets. All green-highlighted paragraphs are agreed *ad referendum* – a routine diplomatic procedure in which individual parts of a document can be agreed to with the assumption that the whole document will be agreed upon later. If the whole document is not agreed upon, states parties have no obligation to keep to their positions on earlier agreement of the individual parts.

Writing to delegations in the run-up to WG8, the Chair indicated that he would like to quickly review the yellow-highlighted text that had been agreed during three rounds of open-ended informal consultations with the expectation that these can promptly be turned into green-highlighted text. He indicated that his next priority would be to put forward some textual amendments that had been the subject of consultations with a range of interested states parties in the hope that these could also become green-highlighted. Once that was done, discussion should then move to aspects of the Science and Technology (S&T) Advisory Mechanism in Annex III which have been discussed in informal consultations but which require further work. After that, discussion would return to unhighlighted text on the recommended measures on the seven paragraph 8 topics assigned to the WG (Annex I) and to unhighlighted text on the International Cooperation and Assistance (ICA) Mechanism (Annex II). The Chair concluded this section in his letter by saying ‘Finally, and if necessary, I would suggest to return to any issues still open in Annexes II and III on the two mechanisms.’ This is perhaps a reflection of the politics of the WG in which elements of the two proposed mechanisms are being mirrored with each other owing to the perceptions of some delegates that they need to have equal prominence in the overall package.

About these reports

Reports in this series from the first seven Working Group sessions (and earlier BWC meetings including Review Conferences and Meetings of States Parties) are available from the link provided below.

These reports have been produced by the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP) for all BWC meetings with NGO registration since the Sixth Review Conference (2006). They are available from <https://www.cbw-events.org.uk/bwc-rep.html> where a subscription link is available. The reports are written by Richard Guthrie, CBW Events, who is solely responsible for their contents <richard@cbw-events.org.uk>.

Tuesday 10th February 2026

The BWC Working Group: a move from yellow to green but much uncoloured

The Eighth Session of the Working Group (WG) on the strengthening of the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) opened on Monday morning with Ambassador Frederico S Duque Estrada Meyer (Brazil) in the Chair. In his opening remarks he stressed that to make progress delegations will have up to three minutes for a first intervention on any paragraph; should further interventions be required after new language is proposed from the floor, a second intervention on the same paragraph may not exceed two minutes. The opening formalities were brief.

There were few significant advances, but numerous movements towards consensus on particular aspects. Nevertheless, there were many areas where divergences seem as marked as before. At the end of the day there was much more text highlighted in green than there had been at the beginning. There remains much unhighlighted text brought forward from earlier drafts. Where proposals have been suggested by delegates, but are not agreed by all, these are indicated in the text using square brackets.

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The move from yellow to green and additional text

In line with his announced plan of work, the Chair moved through the paragraphs in document [BWC/WG/8/CRP.1/Rev.1](#) that were highlighted in yellow indicating that they had been agreed during the informal consultations held between WG7 and WG8. Most of these achieved agreement in plenary and so became green-highlighted text. Some of the paragraphs were not agreed to because of new amendments being proposed or because delegates had felt related paragraphs should be agreed first. The second workstream was new text introduced by the Chair which had not been previously discussed. While there remained some outstanding issues, a number of the proposals allowed for agreement on some previously parked paragraphs.

Just before lunch, the Chair announced he would ask certain delegates to coordinate what he described as ‘small groups’ to try and achieve agreement on particular points. The selected points were: the cross-cutting issue of consensus [Husham Ahmed (Pakistan)]; four inter-related paragraphs in Annex I [Husham Ahmed (Pakistan)]; rules of procedure [Daisuke Namioka (Japan), Husham Ahmed (Pakistan), Talgat Ashetov (Kazakhstan)]; and three points relating to the international cooperation and assistance (ICA) mechanism – mechanism machinery, the ICA Fund and cost-sharing [Thomas Fetz (Canada), Hope Reyes (Philippines)].

The first of these to be acted on was the four Annex I paragraphs (5, 30, 36 and 45). The afternoon plenary was suspended for a considerable time while this work was carried out which resulted in a new text for each of these which was presented in plenary. Language was proposed to streamline the existing Article X database, the proposed Article VII database and the proposed online exchange platform into a unified portal. Set-up costs for these tools and the unified portal would be funded through voluntary

contributions, with the running costs covered by assessed contributions. The proposed texts were not discussed further so that delegates had a chance to think about these overnight.

Thematic discussion

As many of the issues where there were divergences expressed were raised in more than one of the Chair's workstreams these are probably best discussed thematically. The points highlighted here are only a selection of those raised overall.

Consensus in the science and technology (S&T) mechanism – there were some calls for consensus reports from the components of the S&T mechanism, although many of these accepted that there could be a 'some say this, some say that' report that included all of the divergent views of experts. There was recognition by some in the room that S&T determinations are not the same as political determinations, including by the Chair. Concerns were raised that specifying the process of reporting too tightly could hinder the work of the experts. This will be an aspect of the small group discussion on consensus.

Liaison with other multilateral bodies – delegates disagreed on whether to specifically list multilateral organizations (like the WHO) whose work is relevant to the BWC that the S&T mechanism might interact with. Arguments were expressed about avoiding duplication with other bodies while others highlighted there were common areas with other bodies that were relevant to the BWC. The limitations of any list that could never be exhaustive were highlighted. The relevant paragraph remains parked.

Role of future Review Conferences in relation to the S&T mechanism – although Review Conferences routinely examine processes established by earlier Conferences there were suggestions that this should be explicitly specified in the WG draft decision in relation to the two proposed mechanisms. Some delegates suggested that the Meetings of States Parties (MSPs) might have a role in reviewing the mechanisms which were countered by others. A point of divergence was whether each future Review Conference would actively renew the mechanisms by a decision in each five-year cycle or should the mechanisms continue until a Review Conference decides to terminate them? There are some tasks allocated to the President of a Review Conference which would apply inter-sessionally but it is unclear whether this should be responsibility of the President of the last Conference or the forthcoming one.

Role of Meetings of States Parties – there is a clear consensus that any collection of measures, including the two mechanisms, that might be agreed at the Tenth BWC Review Conference would include an annual MSP. However, the role and status of the MSP remains the subject of divergent views with some delegates wanting to limit the role of MSPs with others wishing to allocate oversight tasks which would include taking some decisions on the operation of the mechanisms and other inter-sessional processes. What if the Review Conference cannot reach consensus on one of the tasks allocated to it? Should the mechanisms be stalled for five years or should the next MSP be delegated with the task of trying to resolve this? This was the precedent set after the inability of the Eighth Review Conference (2016) to reach consensus on the inter-sessional programme of work – that Review Conference handed the task to the 2017 MSP which adopted the work programme for 2018-2020.

Temporary Working Groups (TWGs) – the creation of TWGs to examine specific topics has long been accepted as part of the S&T mechanism. As ever, the devil is in the detail. There was divergence expressed over whether TWGs should be established only by a Review Conference or by an MSP, with some states expressing concern that waiting during five-year Review Conference cycles would hinder the mechanism's ability to respond to events. There is provision for a TWG to be created by states parties through a written silence procedure [i.e., it goes ahead unless anyone raises an objection] if proposed by the Chair of the mechanism. However, if this was used, then who decides the financial arrangements?

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Wednesday 11th February 2026

The BWC Working Group: the second day of the Eighth Session

The second day of the Eighth Session of the Working Group (WG) on the strengthening of the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) opened on Tuesday morning with Ambassador Frederico S Duque Estrada Meyer (Brazil) in the Chair.

The day started with a return to the four inter-related paragraphs discussed on Monday. There were also discussions on paragraphs from the ‘confidence-building and transparency’ and ‘compliance and verification’ sections. Following the plenary, informal consultations were scheduled to be held in a small room from 20:00 to go on no more than two hours. As a country was holding a national reception at its mission during the early evening, special arrangements had to be made to allow delegates to re-enter the Palais des Nations after hours.

The official WG8 web page is at <https://meetings.unoda.org/meeting/79376/>.

The four inter-related paragraphs

Revised texts for these four paragraphs (5, 30, 36, and 45) from Annex I of the Chair’s text (document [BWC/WG/8/CRP.1/Rev.1](#)) had been circulated late on Monday afternoon which were the focus of discussion in plenary at the start of the morning. There were many points that had remained which had long-held significant divergences. For example, Russia has long wanted to make a clear differentiation between international cooperation and assistance (ICA) activities under Article X and preparation for humanitarian response to potential biological threats under Article VII; while the majority see the benefits accrued under the two articles as synergistic and are less worried about any overlap between them or activities that encompass both. Some delegations wanted the sorts of offers for assistance across the paragraphs to be listed while others wanted simpler text such as ‘deployable capabilities relevant to the Convention’ without providing a list. It was apparent that the long list was not seen as ideal but delegations that had spent political effort bringing forward offers and providing resources for them would have an acknowledgement of what they could bring. There were suggestions that such detail could be put in a footnote but this was countered with a suggestion that this could open up a ‘Pandora’s box’ of future footnote proposals.

The Chair asked Husham Ahmed (Pakistan) to continue coordinating a ‘small group’ on this which met for the rest of the morning with the plenary suspended. The coordinator reported back to the afternoon plenary with new text which he described as finding convergence without privileging specific initiatives and that there was a delicate balance within and across these paragraphs. The result was everyone could be ‘equally unhappy’. He expressed the opinion that introducing further edits or changes could upset this balance. Delegations will return to these paragraphs later.

Confidence-building and transparency

During the afternoon there were plenary discussions on a new paragraph to replace paragraphs 12 and 13 from Annex I of the Chair’s text regarding possible improvements to the BWC system of confidence-building measures (CBMs). Again, a question of whether

past proposals in this area should be listed was a focal point of divergence. There have been a number of proposals made in this area, many of which have been the subject of significant disagreements. When other paragraphs had been discussed that related to voluntary transparency measures, there had been strong opposition to listing proposals made in that area and some delegations indicated that either both areas should list proposals or neither should. No conclusions were reached on this paragraph.

Compliance and verification

The subject of verification has been perhaps the most contentious issue within the BWC over the last quarter century or so. There is a clear consensus that there should be an Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on compliance and verification established by the Tenth BWC Review Conference to be held in 2027. Two paragraphs from Annex I were discussed in Plenary.

Paragraph 16 relates to measures that might be considered by the OEWG. The Chair's text repeated language agreed at the Ninth Review Conference (2022) that referred to 'possible legally-binding measures'. This wording had been chosen at the Review Conference to avoid prejudicing future considerations but its inclusion here prompted the same retort made in 2022 that there are no effective verification systems that are non-legally binding. Others have pointed out that, while an effective verification system would need a core of legally-binding provisions, these may be reinforced by additional provisions that perhaps do not have that status and so other provisions need exploring. After a number of amendments were put forward to this paragraph which were unresolved in plenary discussion, the Chair asked Bastiaan Blaauw (Netherlands) to consult with delegations in the plenary room during a brief suspension of the meeting to see if progress could be made. After these consultations, he reported back to the resumed plenary that the conclusion he had reached was that a return to the Chair's original paragraph was the best basis for future work.

Discussion then turned to paragraph 17 which referred to methods, procedures and techniques that could contribute to verification but the predominant discussion on this paragraph was on the scope of verification – a topic that has been characterised by a long-standing divergence of views. The USA proposed focusing verification specifically on Articles I and II of the Convention for the OEWG. This was met with resistance from many delegations who argued that verification should apply more widely. Some of this was from delegations who wanted to have Article X in verification arrangements (who use the phrase 'all provisions of the Convention' to include this). There were also interventions highlighting there were BWC Articles other than I and II that had negative obligations (i.e., the requirement NOT to do something) that were important to compliance. By the time the plenary finished there was no agreement on this paragraph.

The general purpose criterion – a background note

The concept underpinning the BWC is known as the 'general purpose criterion' – that everything relevant to the Convention is prohibited unless held for a permitted purpose, and in types and quantities consistent with that purpose. This means that prohibitions under the Convention apply to materials and technologies far beyond what would directly be considered a 'weapon'. The criterion is widely recognized by analysts as not only being key to understanding compliance, but also to understanding how compliance of negative obligations might be verified. However, it rarely gets mentioned directly at a diplomatic level. As many materials and technologies have potentials to be used for either peaceful or hostile purposes, getting implementation of the general purpose criterion correct is vital to ensure negative-obligation compliance measures do not hinder peaceful uses. The general purpose criterion ensures that the BWC prohibitions remain relevant regardless of future scientific and technological developments, and that the prohibitions cover yet-to-be-discovered pathogens and toxins that may be employed as weapons.

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Thursday 12th February 2026

The Eighth Session of the BWC Working Group: the third day

Wednesday was the International Day of Women and Girls in Science. This was recognized on what was the third day of the Eighth Session of the Working Group (WG) on the strengthening of the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC). Following the plenary, another evening of informal consultations were scheduled to be held in a small room from 20:00 for two hours.

The day started with a return to the four inter-related paragraphs which was followed by discussions on the two proposed mechanisms and on the topics of ‘organizational, institutional and financial arrangements’, ‘national implementation’ and ‘confidence-building and transparency’. As discussions moved between topics during the open meetings, they are dealt with thematically here rather than strictly chronologically.

Delegates were still working on the text circulated by the WG Chair over the weekend in document [BWC/WG/8/CRP.1/Rev.1](#). The Chair, Ambassador Frederico S Duque Estrada Meyer (Brazil), noted during Wednesday that approximately 70 per cent of the draft was now highlighted in green indicating acceptance *ad referendum*. This is clearly a significant step forward overall, but substantial challenges remain in the other 30 per cent. The meeting also heard from the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) that the call for applications for the fourth Youth for Biosecurity Fellowship programme for young scientists from the Global South had been opened.

The four inter-related paragraphs

The plenary returned to the revised texts for these four paragraphs (5, 30, 36, and 45) from Annex I of the Chair’s text. The coordinator of the small group that had been looking at these, Husham Ahmed (Pakistan), reported back on progress made. He highlighted a few minor edits that had been introduced to improve consistency in the phrasing used across the paragraphs which the room readily accepted. There was some discussion on further language but with no conclusion reached. The delegation of France noted they were awaiting instructions from capital. Delegations will return to these paragraphs later.

National implementation

The text of paragraph 29 of Annex I which encourages states parties to conduct activities at the national level on awareness-raising and education relevant to the Convention was agreed in plenary and thus green-highlighted.

Organizational, institutional and financial arrangements

Paragraph 40 of Annex I deals with the expansion of the role of the ISU. Although the exact staffing requirements will not be known until the document is completed, the paragraph was agreed with gaps for the new staff numbers that are yet to be determined.

The International Cooperation and Assistance (ICA) Mechanism

The small group on three aspects relating to the ICA mechanism was convened for the first time during the morning while the plenary was adjourned until lunchtime. The coordinators, Thomas Fetz (Canada) and Hope Reyes (Philippines), reported back to the

start of the afternoon plenary that one paragraph on the ICA Fund was now highlighted in yellow and that there had been some progress in other areas. This paragraph was agreed in plenary later in the afternoon.

Confidence-building and transparency

During the afternoon, the Chair asked Laurent Masméjean (Switzerland) and Angel Horna (Peru) to do some facilitation on the new paragraph introduced by the Chair during plenary on Tuesday to replace paragraphs 12 and 13 from Annex I regarding possible improvements to the system of confidence-building measures (CBMs). The pair spoke with a number of delegations in the plenary room while the meeting was suspended. Reporting back to the resumed plenary, the facilitators indicated that they had not been able to reach anything conclusive and asked for more time for consultations. A divergence of perspectives amongst delegates that was mentioned was the question of whether proposals should be listed and, if so, how.

The Science and Technology (S&T) Advisory Mechanism

During the morning, some paragraphs that had been yellow-highlighted during the informal consultations on Tuesday evening were introduced into plenary. These included decisions that experts on the Reporting Committee (the smaller S&T body) would be funded from assessed contributions and that Temporary Working Groups (TWGs) could be funded by a mix of assessed and voluntary contributions. These were all agreed.

During the morning, the Chair circulated an informal paper with some text in relation to the structure and composition of elements of the S&T mechanism. This text caused a little confusion as it appeared to have been hastily compiled from the main draft document but with some key parts missing. During the afternoon the Chair suggested this new text was to help delegates focus on some of the issues during the informal consultations to be held in the evening rather than specific text to be negotiated.

A simple sub-paragraph on the appointment of the Reporting Committee [the smaller body] of the mechanism by the Review Conference was green-highlighted with details of the process to be dealt with elsewhere. The question was again raised as to what should happen if the Review Conference could not reach agreement.

On timelines for TWGs, agreement was reached that there should be a 60-day advance notice for convening a new one but that this period could be shortened if the members of the TWG agree to it. There had been recognition in the room that a TWG might have to deal with a time-sensitive issue for which 60 days was too long to wait when the experts involved may be able to convene earlier. An earlier proposal had spoken of the possibility of an ‘emergency meeting’ but this would have opened up a debate about what might constitute an emergency.

Draft rule 3 of the regulations of the mechanism deals with the role of observers within meetings as these are intended to be closed. Draft rule 3.1 allows for observers to attend if they have received prior written approval from the chair of the mechanism. Draft rule 3.2 allows a state party which does not have an expert participating at a meeting of the Review Group [the larger body] to send an observer. Draft rule 3.3 requires that all observers should be citizens of BWC states parties. Australia noted that some observers under 3.1 would be other bodies such as the World Health Organization. [In earlier discussions there had been clear consensus that the mechanism should be liaising with other international bodies.] A question was raised – was it appropriate for the BWC to dictate that an expert representing another body should be a national of a BWC state party? The question remained unresolved at this point.

The draft text says ‘broad themes’ for the mechanism are decided ‘by the Review Conference by consensus’. A number of delegates suggested striking out ‘by consensus’ as otherwise the WG would be dictating to the Review Conference how it should operate. Other delegates wished to retain the phrase.

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Friday 13th February 2026

Slow progress at the Eighth Session and some reflections on science advice

Thursday, the penultimate day of the Eighth Session of the Working Group (WG) on the strengthening of the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC), saw some progress, albeit slow. The Chair, Ambassador Frederico S Duque Estrada Meyer (Brazil), was visibly frustrated at times by the difficulty of getting delegates to be flexible enough to reach agreement on paragraphs being discussed. The visibility of his frustration perhaps peaked when the Russian delegation suggested that this was simply a ‘first reading’ of the text – a perspective the Chair firmly rejected.

The day started with the Chair announcing a new version of the draft decision was being circulated with the document symbol BWC/WG/8/CRP.1/Rev.2. The BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) have indicated this will be posted to the official web page of the Eighth Session which at <https://meetings.unoda.org/meeting/79376/>.

While the day was mostly focused on the Science and Technology (S&T) Advisory Mechanism there was agreement on some procedural paragraphs and, more significantly, adoption *ad referendum* of the four inter-related paragraphs.

The 2026 Youth for Biosecurity Fellowship programme can be found at <https://www.disarmamenteducation.org/#/en/resources/type-41/project/764>.

The four inter-related paragraphs

The coordinator of the small group looking at these, Husham Ahmed (Pakistan), reported back on progress made on paragraphs 5, 30, 36, and 45 from Annex I of Rev.1 of the Chair’s text. There had been some minor editorial changes including some cross references to bring greater clarity. The four paragraphs were taken as a package and adopted. Owing to other changes to the text, paragraph 30 is now numbered 29.

The Science and Technology (S&T) Advisory Mechanism

The morning had started with the Chair indicating that the informal consultations the evening before had been ‘not very useful’ and had made ‘limited progress’ with only a few paragraphs highlighted in yellow. These ended up being discussed at some length.

In plenary, much of the discussion on Thursday was on the Reporting Committee (the smaller body). A key decision was that the Reporting Committee should be ‘up to 25’ members. However, arrangements for appointing the membership of this body remains under discussion. A two-level process seems to be gaining support, in which a list of members-elect is compiled by the chair of the mechanism in consultation with states parties to be adopted as a package by the Review Conference. The members-elect are drawn from nominations put forward by states parties.

The initial reactions have been positive but delegations asked for time to digest the suggestion and its implications. There are indeed some particular implications of this approach. The first is that the invitation to states parties to nominate candidates needs to be made well before the Review Conference. The second is that the chair of the mechanism needs to be appointed before the Review Conference; otherwise the list of members-elect cannot be compiled. The third is that if the mechanism can only be established by a Review Conference, by what means can the chair of the mechanism be

appointed beforehand if the mechanism itself at that moment does not exist? The case for there being a one-off arrangement for the initial establishment of the mechanism appears to be strong. This is before taking into account that many delegations advocate for the membership of the Reporting Committee to be drawn from the membership of the Review Group which means the larger body also needs to be established early.

The need for independence of experts involved in the S&T advisory process was emphasised by many delegations. The challenges of achieving this was the focus of some interventions. This was one of the points upon which it was clear that many delegates taking the floor had no direct experience of processes of science advice.

The issue of replacement of members unable to continue their work in the Reporting Committee was discussed with two options on the table: that the state party can replace them with someone else or that the mechanism chair should appoint a replacement. The first of these has overtones of the experts being the representatives of governments and so many delegations prefer the later. However, details of this process still need to be fleshed out such as how the mechanism chair might consult with states parties on this.

There was much discussion on the reporting from the mechanism. There are many examples in the Chair's draft where one element or other of the mechanism is required to produce a report or a review of some sort. Some interventions suggested that there may be too many reports required. Various terminology has been used within the discussions to describe different kinds of reports, such as 'substantive' or 'factual'. No clear distinctions were offered between these but from the context of comments it would seem that those using these terms were envisaging a 'substantive report' as being one that includes conclusions and recommendations while a 'factual report' would be a shorter summary of discussions that included the differing views expressed. From what has been said in plenary and in the corridors, there remains a gap in perception of how outputs of the S&T mechanism would be used in policy processes and thus what are the most useful form of outputs from the mechanism.

Many delegations have pressed for language on aiming for equitable geographical and gender representation in the S&T mechanism. The USA has wanted to strike out any references to this.

Some reflections on the proposed S&T mechanism

A conscious effort is taken in writing these daily summaries to report as objectively as possible. The following are some personal reflections that do not necessarily represent anyone's views other than the author's own.

Those without direct experience of using scientific inputs into policy making often have a linear view of how science advice operates – a question is posed to experts who produce advice which policy makers can then act upon. The real world, unfortunately, is rather messy. What comes out of the advice can be very influenced by the way the question is posed. There may be contextual information that those who pose the questions are not aware of but the experts are – an inability of the experts to convey this information to the policy community can easily lead to failure of the overall process. This is just one example of how being too prescriptive at this stage about reporting processes could lead to a reporting style from the mechanism that is less than optimum. This would have impacts across the Convention, not just on the international security aspects but also on international cooperation and assistance under Article X.

The UK Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) produced a four-page briefing 'Science in Policy' two decades ago that delegates might find informative (<https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/post/pn196.pdf>).

Rather than look at the experience of one country, delegates may get useful results from engaging with colleagues about what scientific advice has best provided inputs into their national policy processes in recent times.

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Friday 27th February 2026

The closure of the Eighth Session and some reflections

For those of a superstitious inclination, it is never good to have a meeting conclude on Friday 13th. In the event, there was no particular bad luck on the day, but simply a continuation of the decades-long misfortune that has left the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC/BTWC) as an international treaty that has not yet had the chance to make better use of its potential.

The final day of the Eighth Session of the Working Group (WG) on the strengthening of the BWC saw modest progress and the adoption of a procedural report. The day ended with the Chair, Ambassador Frederico S Duque Estrada Meyer (Brazil), circulating a new version of the draft decision (BWC/WG/8/CRP.1/Rev.3). This and other documents from WG8 can be found on the official web page of the Eighth Session at <https://meetings.unoda.org/meeting/79376/>.

WG8 also marked the departure of Leandro Antunes Mariosi who is moving on to another diplomatic posting. Leandro has assisted Ambassador Meyer since he had become WG Chair and the Ambassador gave a heartfelt appreciation of his efforts.

The substantive discussions

The day started with further discussions on the operation of the Science and Technology (S&T) Advisory Mechanism. How to create Temporary Working Groups (TWGs) remained an area of disagreement with the roles of silence procedures and the annual Meeting of States Parties (MSP) being core to this. There were also divergent views on how outputs from the TWGs should be handled. There were discussions without conclusions on how to guarantee the independence of experts within the mechanism and whether it should be specified that meetings should be in-person *vs* virtual. Benefits of in-person meetings were highlighted, but also the ability to hold more virtual meetings at a low cost. The question was posed as to what would happen if there was a future health emergency like the pandemic that reduced travel opportunities.

The meeting moved to discuss elements relating to the International Cooperation and Assistance (ICA) Mechanism. These included whether states parties who contributed above 10 per cent of the annual target (or 20 per cent for entities not states parties) would have observer rights in the ICA Steering Group. The discussions centred around whether this gave too much influence to funders or whether without this there would be insufficient confidence for funders who then might be less willing to donate. As donors would be observers, Russia raised its on-going objections to the rights of observers to address BWC meetings. On cost-sharing, the Chair asked Anmol Sher Singh Bedi (India) to confer with delegations to try to find a text that would allow agreement. The relevant paragraph was then adopted.

There was a cross-cutting discussion on the role of consensus in the future BWC mechanisms which also encompassed the role and function of the MSP and issues of verification. There remains the core disagreement over whether the MSP should be empowered to take administrative and substantive decisions to keep the BWC up to date or if such powers should remain solely with the Review Conference. There were strong

views expressed that multilateralism was underpinned by consensus actions. Concerns were raised that the traditional operation of consensus essentially provides a veto power to individual states to stop things moving forward. On verification, views remain split on whether all verification measures must be legally binding or whether a mixture of legally binding and non-legally binding measures might have merit.

In drawing the substantive discussions in the Eighth Session to a close, the Chair noted that on Monday roughly 60 per cent of the text had been in yellow or green and that this had risen to 75 per cent by the end of WG8 but noted that what was left ‘may be the most difficult parts’. Earlier in the day he had emphasised that much of what was left were not matters for clarification but issues that reflect political choices – ‘If we are unable to bridge them, the consequence is straightforward’.

There will be a number of informal consultations held before WG9 convenes in August with the Chair indicating monthly informal meetings would be useful to maintain momentum. It was also noted that many delegates will be involved with the Review Conference for the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) scheduled for 27 April to 22 May which is likely to take up a lot of working time.

Some reflections on the Working Group

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 or possible consequences of activities. The following are some personal reflections that do not necessarily represent anyone’s views other than the author’s own.

When the WG was established by the Ninth BWC Review Conference (2022) it was allocated 15 days a year for substantive discussions for 4 years. The end of WG8 marks the completion of 50 days out of the 60-day total.

This last report from WG8 was nearly entitled: ‘The Eighth Session – arguing over phrasing while biothreats develop’. It would have possibly suggested to many readers a more pessimistic perspective than the reality; yet that draft headline embodies an underlying truth. There are significant challenges in this field and progress in international solutions is being held up by just a few delegations. Part of this comes across as being the inertia of past positions. There is much that has changed in the world, and in particular within BWC processes, that means there are opportunities here that can benefit all states parties.

When writing a piece like this, any author should challenge themselves to double-check whether it is fair to say the process is being held up by just a few delegations. It is clear that the vast majority of delegates this author has spoken with are in support of the overall package. No one expressed the view that the balance of measures is predominantly in their favour and everyone could point out something they wouldn’t have included in the draft decision that they would accept as part of a consensus agreement. As has been said so many times during the WG, consensus isn’t about finding something everyone is happy about, it is about finding something everyone can live with.

A noticeable feature of WG8 was the impact that routine rotations for postings can have on understandings of policies. Before the Ninth Review Conference, considerable effort had been put in by a number of people and organizations to help diplomats and officials become familiar with how S&T advisory processes work. Three years after the Review Conference, there was perhaps only a handful of people in the room behind country flags who had gone through that experience. This lack of experience of overlap of diplomacy and S&T advice was palpable in some interventions.

There were fewer ‘Meyerisms’ during WG8. He did, however, muse on whether the lack of compromise was because the UN authorities had not given compromise an identity badge – ‘That’s why it doesn’t get into the room, apparently’.

These reports have been produced by the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP) for all BWC meetings with NGO registration since the Sixth Review Conference (2006). They are available from <https://www.cbw-events.org.uk/bwc-rep.html> where a subscription link is available. The reports are written by Richard Guthrie, CBW Events, who is solely responsible for their contents <richard@cbw-events.org.uk>.