

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>.