

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.

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>.