

Ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

2 December 2022

English only

Geneva, 28 November to 16 December 2022

Item 12 of the agenda

Follow-up to the recommendations and decisions of the Eighth Review Conference and the question of future review of the Convention

Proposal for inclusion in the final document of the Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention on “Enhancing Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment as an Integral Part of the Institutional Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention”

Submitted by Panama

1. The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) is the first multilateral disarmament treaty banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), which was negotiated from 1969 until 1971 and does not have any gender-related provision.
2. Since 2019, there has been an increased attention to gender considerations within the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), including statements at the Meetings of Experts, the Meeting of States Parties, UNGA Resolutions¹, research on potential sex-specific effects and gendered impacts of biological weapons², side events and informal exchanges exploring the relevance of gender perspectives in the BWC. Gender is becoming a topical issue for the BWC regime.
3. During the 2020 BWC Meeting of Experts on Institutional Strengthening of the Convention (MX5)³, the 2020 Meeting of States Parties⁴ and the Preparatory Committee for the Ninth Review Conference⁵, Panama submitted a working paper entitled “*Enhancing Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment as an Integral Part of the Institutional Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)*”, which sought to develop a common understanding of the ways that gender equality and women’s empowerment is relevant for the institutional strengthening of the BWC.
4. The annex of the present working paper contains concrete language proposals for inclusion in the final document of the Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention for enhancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in this framework.

¹ See UNGA Resolutions 74/79, 75/88, 76/67 and document A/C.1/77/L.74.

² See, for example, Dalaqua, Renata Hessmann, James Revill, Alastair Hay, and Nancy Connell. 2019. “*Missing Links: Understanding Sex- and Gender-Related Impacts of Chemical and Biological Weapons.*” UNIDIR, Geneva. <https://doi.org/10.37559/WMD/19/gen1>.

³ See document [BWC/MSP/2020/MX.5/WP.6](#).

⁴ See document [BWC/MSP/2020/WP.6](#).

⁵ See document [BWC/CONF.IX/PC/WP.8](#).



Annex

Part II: Final Declaration

Solemn Declaration

- Their recognition of the importance of the equitable and effective participation of women and men in the framework of the Convention. The Conference recalls relevant United Nations resolutions, such as United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), and acknowledges that, while biological weapons are by nature indiscriminate, their effects can be felt differently by women, men, boys and girls as a result of biological differences, inequalities, social and other determinants of health and that greater attention should be given to their possible impact.

Article IV

- The Conference recalls United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), which reaffirms the importance of the equal participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. The Conference encourages States Parties to promote the empowerment of women, including through education, training, mentoring and capacity-building efforts, as appropriate, to participate in the design and implementation of national measures under this Article, and invites States Parties in a position to do so to voluntarily share good practices and experiences in that regard.

Article VII

- The Conference notes that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the relevance of promoting the collection of data disaggregated by sex, age and other characteristics relevant in national contexts, research and analysis on sex-specific effects and social determinants of health, and the adoption of an age-, gender- and culturally-sensitive approach in strategy for preparedness, response and assistance in the event of the use of biological or toxin weapons.

Article X

- The Conference encourages State Parties in a position to do so to promote and fund capacity-building programmes under Article X, including a specific gender component, such as traineeships, fellowships and mentorship programmes. The Conference also encourages States Parties to support and fund research under this Article to generate knowledge about the differentiated impacts of biological weapons on women, men, boys and girls.

Article XII

- The Conference encourages States Parties to promote the equitable participation of women and men in decision-making in the review conferences of the Convention, including gender-balanced BWC Bureau, and to actively support the participation of women in their delegations including through the sponsorship programmes.

Part III: Decisions and Recommendations

- In order to support and increase the participation of developing States Parties in the annual meetings of States Parties, the Conference decides to renew the sponsorship

programme, funded by voluntary contributions from States Parties in a position to provide them. **Gender balance criteria shall apply to the nomination process from each applying developing States Party, as well as to the selection of candidates for the sponsorship programme in order to promote the overall equal representation of women and men in Convention meetings.** The sponsorship programme will continue to be administered by the Implementation Support Unit in consultation with the Chair and Vice-chairs of the Meeting of States Parties (new wording in bold, based on paragraph 10 – Part III of the Final Document of the Eighth Review Conference. Document BWC/CONF.VIII/4).

- The Conference agrees to encourage the equitable and effective participation of women and men in the framework of the Convention. The Conference also agrees to give greater attention to the possible impact of biological weapons on women, men, boys and girls.
 - In view of the increasing participation of women in the work under the Convention and in Convention meetings, the Conference decides that a member of the BWC Bureau will act as gender focal point to advise the Bureau on the integration of a gender perspective; to collect, track and publish data available on the participation of men and women in Convention formal and informal meetings, including as speakers, office-holders, members of the BWC Bureau and subsidiary bodies; and to address reports of harassment, including sexual harassment, during Convention meetings, in line with the Code of Conduct to prevent harassment, including sexual harassment, at UN system events. The Conference also decides to adapt the ISU's mandate to allow it to support the work of the gender focal point.
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