

Meeting 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

13 December 2023

English only

2023 Meeting
Geneva, 11–13 December 2023

The value of inclusive participation in meetings of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

Submitted by Australia on behalf of Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, The Gambia, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Montenegro, the Netherlands (the Kingdom of), New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Panama, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Guinea, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Ukraine and Uruguay

We strongly regret attempts at the December 2023 session of the Working Group on Strengthening the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) and at the 2023 BWC Meeting of States Parties to deny observer organisations the ability to participate in deliberations by making statements in plenary meetings. This would be contrary to decades-long practice within the BWC. These efforts to prevent participation undermine the principles of inclusivity, transparency, and openness that have long played an important role in our work.

Organisations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), among others, have unique experience, insight and knowledge to contribute to BWC deliberations, including to the topics under consideration by the Working Group. The full participation of these and other relevant agencies also contributes to more effective coordination between the BWC and other relevant international stakeholders.

The ability of regional intergovernmental organisations to deliver statements in BWC plenary meetings also benefits our deliberations by allowing such organizations to share their views.

Ensuring observer participation is not a mere procedural formality; it significantly enriches our deliberations by ensuring a comprehensive understanding of complex issues and contributing to a more informed and inclusive debate. Consistent with the proud history of the BWC, we support the continued inclusion of such organisations as observers in BWC meetings, including their ability to speak in formal plenary, in line with long-standing practice within the BWC. We also appreciate the valuable inputs of NGOs and support hearing their views in accordance with established practice.

