

# 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

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Comprehensive consideration of all provisions of the Convention

## Report of the Implementation Support Unit on the implementation of its mandate, 2017-2022

Submitted by the Implementation Support Unit

### Summary

This report describes the activities of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) since the Eighth Review Conference to implement its mandate to support States Parties in the administration and comprehensive implementation of the Convention, the promotion of universalization, and the exchange of confidence-building measures (CBMs). The Conference decided that the annual Meetings of States Parties would consider the annual reports of the ISU and such reports have therefore been submitted and considered annually since 2017. The Conference also decided to renew the mandate of the Implementation Support Unit agreed to at the Seventh Review Conference, *mutatis mutandis*, for the period from 2017 to 2021. The 2020 Meeting of States Parties, taking into account the extraordinary circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, exceptionally and without setting a precedent, agreed that the mandate of the Implementation Support Unit shall be extended until the Ninth Review Conference, when its mandate will be reviewed. This report is submitted to facilitate such review by States Parties.

## I. Introduction

1. The ISU was established by the Sixth Review Conference to provide administrative support to meetings agreed by the Review Conference as well as comprehensive implementation and universalization of the Convention and the exchange of confidence-building measures.<sup>1</sup> The Seventh Review Conference decided to renew the mandate of the Unit, *mutatis mutandis*, for the period from 2012 to 2016. The Conference also decided, that in addition to the tasks mandated by the Sixth Review Conference, the ISU will also implement the decision to establish and administer the database for assistance requests and offers, and facilitating the associated exchange of information among States Parties, and support, as appropriate, the implementation by the States Parties of the decisions and recommendations of the Seventh Review Conference.

2. The Eighth Review Conference decided to renew the mandate of the Unit for the period from 2017 to 2021. The Conference also decided to continue the cooperation and assistance database established by the Seventh Review Conference and tasked the ISU, with

<sup>1</sup> See [BWC/CONF.VI/6](#), Part III, paragraphs 5 and 6.



inputs to be provided by States Parties, to improve the database. The Conference also decided to renew the sponsorship programme, funded by voluntary contributions from States Parties in a position to provide them.<sup>2</sup> The 2020 Meeting of States Parties, taking into account the extraordinary circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, exceptionally and without setting a precedent, agreed that the mandate of the Implementation Support Unit shall be extended until the Ninth Review Conference, when its mandate would be reviewed.<sup>3</sup>

3. The ISU has acted in accordance with this mandate and has submitted annual reports to the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 Meetings of States Parties.<sup>4</sup> This present report summarizes the information provided in the annual reports and also includes information from 1 January until 31 January 2022.

## **II. Institutional arrangements**

4. The ISU is located in the Geneva Branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). Accordingly, UNODA is responsible for the recruitment, selection and performance reviews of staff members and it supports the ISU through a range of other services including financial, logistical and administrative management. The Branch also facilitates the ISU's compliance with United Nations rules and regulations so as to enhance its effective functioning. UNODA is also fiduciary responsible and manages the voluntary contributions described in paragraph 11 below that are received in support of the BWC from States Parties and international/regional organizations, while the United Nations Office at Geneva manages the assessed contributions received from BWC States Parties as well as the Working Capital Fund established by the decision of the 2018 Meeting of States Parties.

### **A. ISU staffing**

5. The ISU has three fixed-term staff positions at the P5, P4 and P3 level, who are employed subject to the Staff Rules and Regulations of the United Nations and funded from the assessed contributions received from BWC States Parties. The activities of the ISU (and BWC activities in general) are supported by the United Nations in accordance with the annual resolution adopted by the General Assembly but receive no funding from the regular budget of the United Nations.

6. Mr. Daniel Feakes is the Chief of the Unit and Senior Political Affairs Officer, Mr. Hermann Lampalzer serves in the P4 post as Deputy Chief and Political Affairs Officer and Ms. Ngoc Phuong van der Blij serves in the P3 post as Political Affairs Officer. The ISU operated with only two staff members for half of 2017 due to the temporary absence of one staff member. Additionally, the Unit operated at reduced capacity from January to April 2018 due to one staff member working reduced hours. The ISU has been assisted by several consultants, individual contractors and interns.

7. With a small number of staff, any instability in staffing can have a significant impact on the work of the ISU. The ISU managed to maintain the same level of service to States Parties and to the office holders during those periods of reduced staffing capacity, which was only possible due to an increased workload shouldered by the remaining staff members over a prolonged period. The current funding arrangements for the ISU do not permit the recruitment of temporary staff to cover such gaps and also do not allow unspent funds from one year to be rolled over to the next year.

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<sup>2</sup> See BWC/CONF.VIII/4, Part III, paragraphs 8, 9 and 10.

<sup>3</sup> See BWC/MSP/2020/7, paragraph 31 (d).

<sup>4</sup> See BWC/MSP/2017/4, BWC/MSP/2018/4 and Amend.1, BWC/MSP/2019/4 and Amend.1, and BWC/MSP/2020/4.

## B. ISU funding

8. In accordance with the decision on its establishment taken by the Sixth Review Conference, the ISU is funded by the States Parties to the Convention as part of the costs of the intersessional programme, which the Eighth Review Conference decided would be “shared by all States Parties to the Convention, based on the United Nations scale of assessment prorated to take into account differences in membership between the Convention and the United Nations”.<sup>5</sup>

9. The budget for the ISU is included in the annual assessed contributions from States Parties and reflected in the cost estimates approved by the Eighth Review Conference, the 2017 Meeting of States Parties, the 2019 Meeting of States Parties and the 2020 Meeting of States Parties.<sup>6</sup> During the 2017-20 intersessional period, these costs included the expenditures relating to the three staff members, a small travel budget of USD 20,000 per year and a small equipment budget of USD 5,000 per year. The travel and equipment budgets were increased in the agreed cost estimates for 2021 and 2022 to USD 40,000 and USD 15,000 respectively.

10. As reported by the ISU throughout the intersessional programme, challenges have persisted with respect to the financial situation of the Convention, which also impacted on ISU staff and only short-term contracts could be given in 2017 and 2018. However, the adoption of budgetary and financial measures by the 2018 Meeting of States Parties has contributed to improving the overall financial situation and also meant that one-year contracts could be given to the staff members of the ISU from July 2019 to June 2021. However, the staff members have once again been put on short-term contracts from July 2021 onwards.

11. As encouraged by the Seventh Review Conference, the ISU has also continued to receive voluntary contributions from several States Parties in a position to do so to enhance its ability to carry out its mandated tasks. The chart below shows the contributions received by UNODA and details of each contribution were provided in the annual reports of the ISU. The following States Parties have provided voluntary contributions since the Eighth Review Conference:

(a) The contributions from **Australia** were used to organize a regional universalization workshop in the Pacific in 2018 as well as to contribute to the BWC sponsorship programme.

(b) The contributions from **Canada** were used to strengthening global mechanisms and capacities for responding to deliberate use of biological agents, to respond to requests for assistance on national implementation and universalization activities in developing States in Africa and in support of the BWC sponsorship programme.

(c) The contribution from **Finland** is being used to provide assistance to developing States Parties in the context of Article X to strengthen their national expertise and capacities to fulfil their obligations under the BWC and foster South-South cooperation in this regard.

(d) The contributions from **France** are being used for several activities, including the conduct of Article VII tabletop exercises for Francophone States Parties in West Africa, the preparation of a comprehensive study including three virtual workshops on the establishment of an Article VII database, the provision of assistance for national implementation activities upon request in Francophone African States Parties and for the BWC sponsorship programme.

(e) The contributions from **Germany** were used to develop the electronic CBM platform, conduct a BWC national implementation workshop in Kazakhstan upon request from Central Asian States Parties, to support the BWC sponsorship programme and to contribute to the organization of workshops on a science and technology review mechanism for the BWC.

<sup>5</sup> See [BWC/CONF.VIII/4](#), Part III, paragraph 11.

<sup>6</sup> See [BWC/CONF.VIII/5](#), [BWC/MSP/2017/5](#), [BWC/MSP/2019/6](#) and [BWC/MSP/2020/6](#) respectively.

(f) The contribution from **India** was used to support the BWC sponsorship programme.

(g) The contributions from **Ireland** were used to support the work of the ISU, including the improvement of the cooperation and assistance database and the publication of an introduction to the BWC.

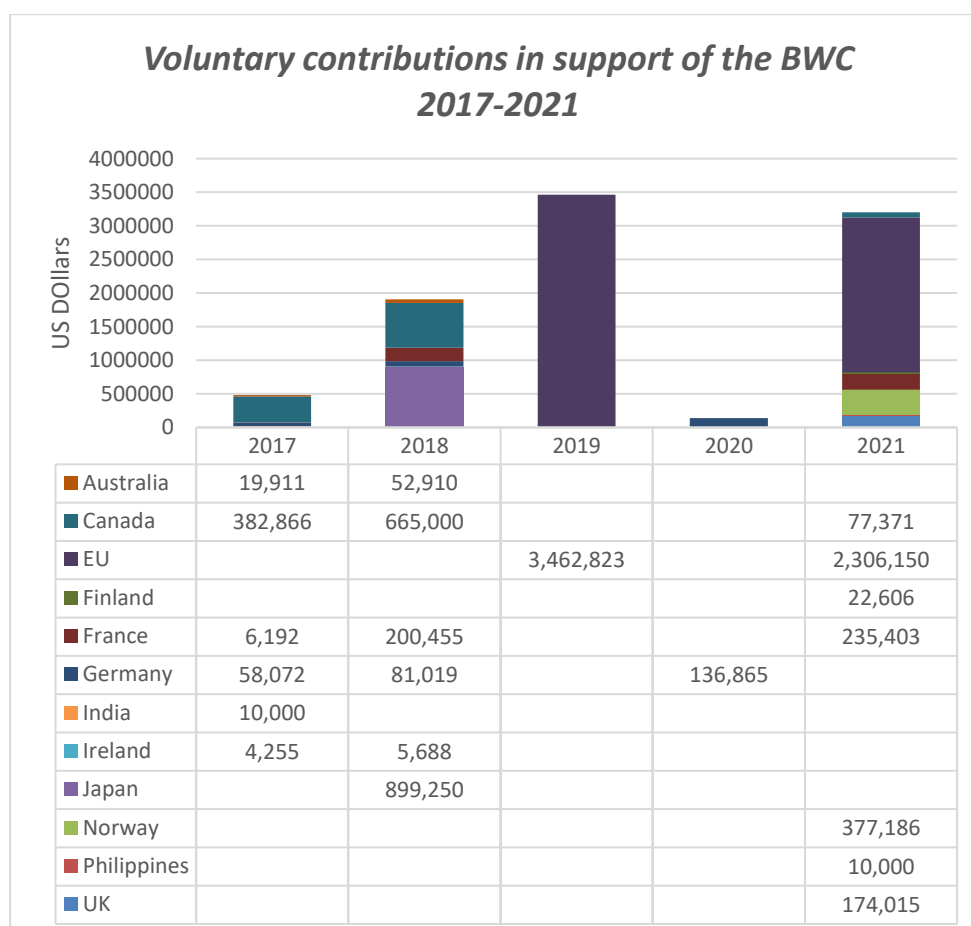
(h) The contribution from **Japan** was used to strengthen national, subregional and international capacities to prepare for and respond to deliberate use of biological or toxin weapons with a focus on South-East Asia and the organization of a training workshop for BWC National Contact Points in South-East Asia on domestic implementation aspects.

(i) The contribution from **Norway** is being used to support Article X related activities in developing States Parties and to improve the cooperation and assistance database.

(j) The contribution from the **Philippines** is being used to further improve the cooperation and assistance database.

(k) The contribution from the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** is being used to fulfil requests from CARICOM Member States for the provision of legislative assistance and support in the preparation of the annual Confidence-Building Measures in order to improve the implementation of the Convention in the region.

**Figure I**



12. In addition, the **European Union** has supported the BWC during the intersessional programme through the adoption of three multi-year Council Decisions. Each Decision involved significant financial contributions to UNODA for activities in support of the BWC, particularly for capacity-building activities in developing States Parties. The activities funded under the Council Decisions complement the work of the ISU and allow it to respond to requests received from States Parties to improve implementation of the Convention and build capacities at the domestic level. Between January 2016 and February 2019, the EU provided

EUR 2,340,000 under Council Decision 2016/51/CFSP. The following activities were undertaken: various activities in support of the universalization of the Convention; the organization of five regional science and technology workshops to discuss the implications of scientific and technological advances for the BWC; the provision of capacity development assistance to nine developing States Parties; the holding of a series of regional workshops in preparation of the Eighth Review Conference; the development of several awareness-raising tools (including the development of the e-CBM platform) and the holding of educational events. Two staff members were employed within UNODA's Geneva Branch in the professional and general service categories to support the implementation of the Council Decision.

13. Subsequently, Council Decision 2019/97/CFSP was launched in January 2019, which provides EUR 3,029,857 in support of the BWC. In light of delays in implementing the Council Decision due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the duration of the Council Decision has been extended by one year until February 2023. Under Council Decision 2019/97 universalization efforts are being continued. In total eight developing States Parties (Botswana, Fiji, Jamaica, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, State of Palestine, Sudan and Viet Nam) were selected to receive assistance under two capacity building programmes, one focused on strengthening the overall implementation of the Convention at the national level, the other one focusing specifically on strengthening national preparedness, prevention and response capabilities. The Council Decision also foresees the organization of up to three voluntary transparency exercises upon request from States Parties. An initiative aiming at increasing the involvement of youth in BWC discussions is also underway. Furthermore, four regional workshops are planned to support the preparations for the Ninth Review Conference. The Council Decision also includes funds for the Sponsorship Programme. Lastly, a number of outreach and awareness raising tools have and are currently being developed. The implementation of the Council Decision is supported by two staff members in UNODA's Geneva Branch in the professional and general service categories, as well as a Junior Professional Officer sponsored by France.

14. In November 2021, the EU adopted Council Decision 2021/2072/CFSP in support of building resilience in biosafety and biosecurity through the BWC. The Council Decision provides EUR 2,147,444 over two-years to complement Council Decision 2019/97 by placing a particular focus on strengthening biosafety and biosecurity capabilities in developing States Parties in Africa, building capacity for BWC National Contact Points, advancing the universalization of the Convention, facilitating the review of developments in science and technology of relevance to the Convention and broadening support for voluntary transparency exercises. Three staff in the professional and general service categories will be employed within UNODA, with two based at the UNODA Geneva Branch and one in Addis Ababa at the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

15. Overall, the total amount of voluntary contributions provided in support of BWC-related activities has significantly increased since the previous intersessional programme. Such voluntary contributions have enabled the ISU to respond to considerably more requests from developing States Parties on a broader geographical basis than before and address various aspects of the Convention.

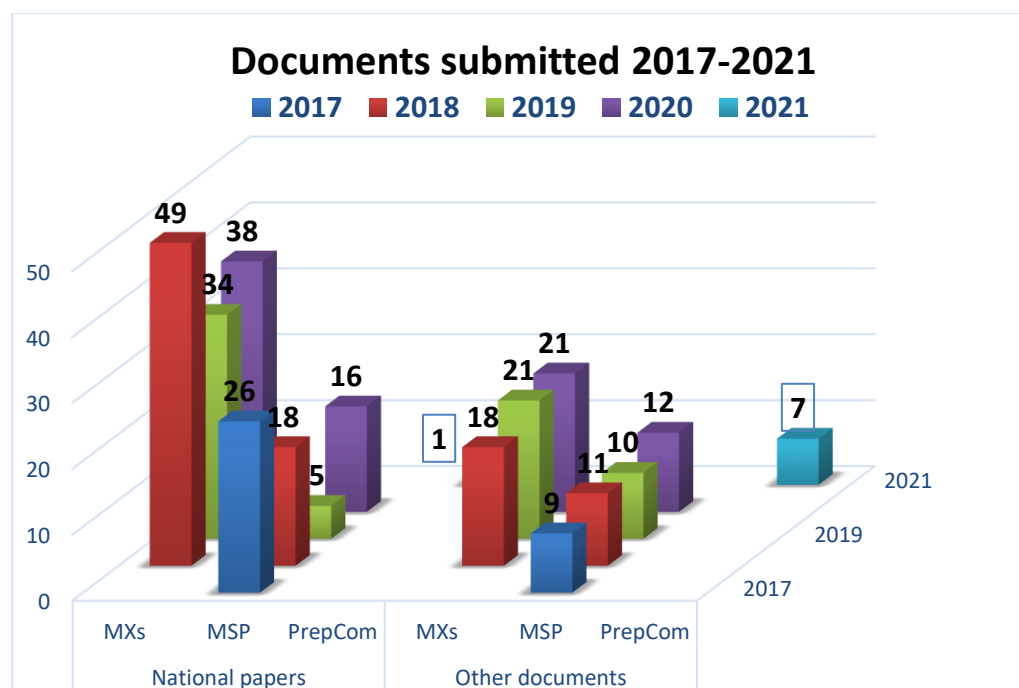
16. At the same time, voluntary contributions are usually short-term in nature and therefore do not always address the long-term needs expressed by requesting States Parties. While voluntary contributions are very welcome, they are often earmarked by States Parties for specific events or activities, and do not always assist the ISU in responding to individual requests from States Parties on a broad geographical basis.

17. It should be noted that the ISU has registered many requests from developing States Parties to support the implementation of the Convention in multiple areas. Not all of these requests can be met within existing resources or voluntary contributions. Additional budgetary resources, preferably funded from assessed contributions to ensure sustainability, would significantly increase the ability of the ISU to fulfil the existing terms of its mandate to support implementation in all States Parties. Any expansion of the ISU's current mandate would certainly require additional resources.

### III. Administrative support for the Convention

18. The ISU formed the substantive secretariat for BWC meetings during the 2017-20 intersessional programme and the Preparatory Committee of the Ninth Review Conference in 2021, and supported the activities of the BWC office holders. This included: drafting and issuing communications to States Parties, international organisations and NGOs; drafting speeches and other materials for the office holders; processing meeting registrations; researching and drafting substantive background documents; preparing conference documents and reports; processing working papers; and providing procedural, technical and substantive advice to the office holders and States Parties. The chart below shows the number of official documents submitted each year from 2017 to 2021. During this time, the ISU oversaw the issuance of 296 official BWC documents.

Figure II



19. Because the 2020 Meetings of Experts and the 2020 Meeting of States Parties were postponed several times due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ISU organized a total of nine informal webinars between October 2020 and July 2021 to facilitate informal discussions on the topics to be considered by each Meeting of Experts. Each webinar was moderated by the Chair of the respective Meeting of Experts, organized by the ISU and was attended by experts from around the world.

20. In 2021, the old website of the United Nations Office at Geneva, which had previously hosted the BWC website, was decommissioned and replaced with a new website. As no provision was made in the new website for the websites of the disarmament conventions, it was decided that the websites of all disarmament conventions would be hosted on the existing UNODA website ([www.un.org/disarmament](http://www.un.org/disarmament)), maintained by UNODA in New York. The ISU therefore oversaw the migration of the BWC website to the UNODA website. Alongside a comprehensive update of the various webpages<sup>7</sup>, the migration was required to ensure compliance with UN information security policies and standards and provide a single information repository on various disarmament matters.

21. The BWC website continues to act as the primary tool for the dissemination of information related to the Convention by, and to, States Parties. The website provides up-to-

<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.un.org/disarmament/biological-weapons>.

date information on meetings and related activities, official documents, statements, press releases, background materials, information on relevant activities in other organisations, useful links, and membership lists.

22. The ISU has also made increased use of social media to enhance awareness about the BWC. The ISU's Twitter and Facebook accounts are designed to complement the BWC website which remains the primary repository of documents and information on the Convention. During 2021, the ISU also launched a BWC YouTube channel which hosts video recordings from the webinars mentioned above, as well as other video products.<sup>8</sup>

23. In addition, the ISU publishes a quarterly "BWC Newsletter", an informal electronic publication which provides information on developments relevant to the Convention, updates on ISU activities, details of assistance opportunities for developing States Parties and links to publications of relevance to the Convention. The Newsletter is circulated by e-mail and posted on the BWC website.<sup>9</sup>

24. In 2018, the ISU, with the support of the European Union and Ireland issued a publication entitled "The Biological Weapons Convention: An Introduction." A second edition was issued in November 2021, and the publication will soon be available in all six official UN languages.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, with funding from the European Union, and input from a number of national experts, the ISU has prepared a "Guide to Implementing the Biological Weapons Convention" which will provide practical information on the implementation of the Convention for States Parties. The publication will be available in both hard copy for distribution at workshops and other such events, as well as on the BWC website.

25. The ISU maintained regular contact with many scientific, professional and academic institutions as well as industry and non-governmental organisations. These contacts have provided insight and information that assisted the ISU in supporting the efforts of States Parties, including in the preparation of background information documents.

26. The ISU maintained regular contact with a wide range of international and regional organizations relevant to the Convention, as detailed in its annual reports. The ISU, in activities fully consistent with its mandate, remains an active participant in regular processes, outreach and implementation efforts undertaken by these organizations.

## IV. Implementation of the Convention

27. The ISU collects details of national points of contact for the Convention and makes them available to all States Parties on the BWC website.<sup>11</sup> The creation of a new restricted access page was necessitated as a result of the BWC website migration. The new page was established by the ISU in late 2020. As of 31 January 2022, 129 States Parties had nominated a national point of contact as requested by the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Review Conferences.

28. Participation by the ISU in workshops and seminars plays a crucial role in raising awareness of the Convention and its implementation, both for national governments and other relevant actors such as international and regional organizations, the scientific community, professional associations, academia and the private sector. The ISU accepted select invitations to participate in a range of meetings and events throughout the intersessional period. Details of the events attended are provided in the annual reports of the ISU. The chart below gives an overview for the period of the 2017-20 intersessional programme.

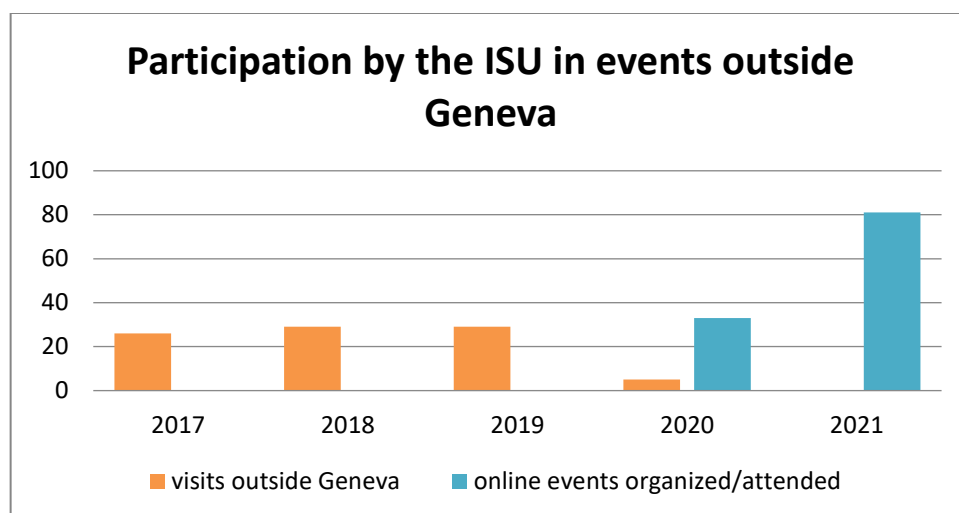
<sup>8</sup> See [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXU-Y\\_IU5TsvVEaJC6LUrtw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXU-Y_IU5TsvVEaJC6LUrtw).

<sup>9</sup> See <https://mailchi.mp/077db30470f6/bwc-isu-newsletter-april-2021>.

<sup>10</sup> See <https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/The-BWC-An-Introduction.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> See <https://unitednations.sharepoint.com/sites/bwc-ncp>.

Figure III

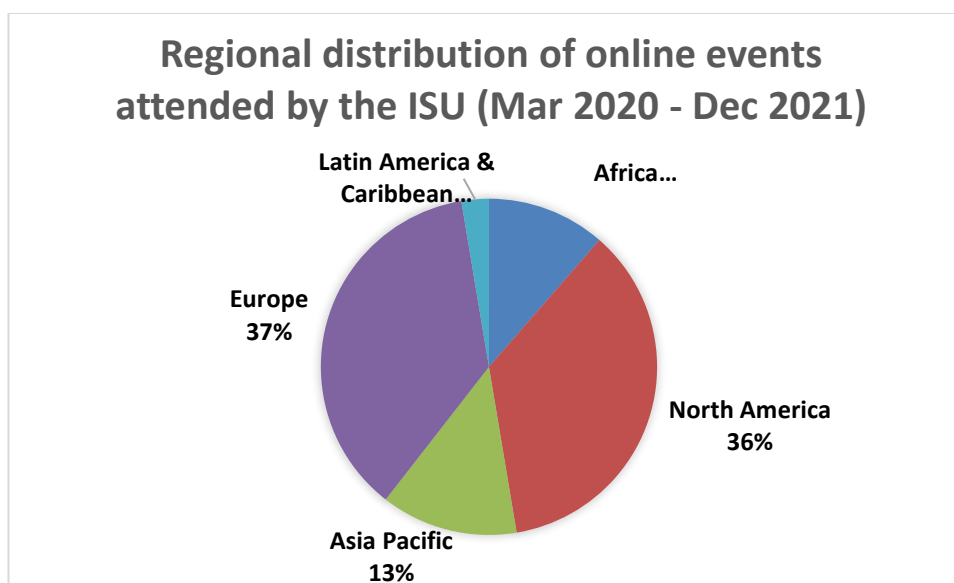


29. Thanks to the multiple voluntary contributions received during the intersessional programme, the ISU organized and/or participated in a considerable number of BWC-related activities around the world between 2017 and spring 2020. However, as evident from the chart, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic led to a halt in any travel by the ISU since March 2020. At the same time, the number of online events organized or attended has increased considerably and has allowed the ISU to engage with States Parties and other relevant stakeholders with whom it would previously have not been feasible within the available human and financial resources.

30. In particular, with funding provided by Japan, the ISU organized an online training course for BWC National Contact Points in Southeast Asia.<sup>12</sup> The course was internally designed by the ISU and was conducted over two weeks in September and October 2020. Prior to the commencement of the course, all participants were required to complete a questionnaire which sought their views on their expectations of the running of the online course, the topics to be discussed and the outcome they hoped to achieve. Participants could also describe the challenges faced as NCPs and describe the range of assistance they identified for national implementation of the BWC. The course consisted of four thematic modules relevant to the Convention's national implementation processes conducted over two weeks. The participants followed the modules via live sessions (approximately 90 minutes per session) and self-paced learning materials, which together represented the equivalent of a two-day in-person workshop. Similar online modalities and methodologies have been used in all other national and regional workshops conducted by the ISU during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>12</sup> See [BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/WP.1](#).



**Figure IV**

## V. Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs)

31. In accordance with the decisions of the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Review Conferences, the ISU continues to support the exchange of confidence-building measures (CBMs). The ISU maintains electronic versions of the CBM forms on the BWC website in all official languages. In accordance with the request of the Seventh Review Conference, the ISU, with financial support from Germany and the European Union, developed an electronic CBM platform, which enables the electronic submission of CBM reports in all six languages through the platform. Furthermore, it also provides for data-search capabilities of CBMs and facilitates a more user-friendly approach in the manner and format in which information is submitted by States Parties. The tool was introduced at the 2018 Meeting of Experts on Strengthening National Implementation and utilized for the first time in 2019. Accordingly, all the CBM returns since their introduction in 1987 are made available on this platform.<sup>13</sup>

32. In accordance with the decision of the Sixth Review Conference, on 15 January every year, the ISU writes to the permanent missions and the national points of contact of the States Parties informing them of the deadline for the annual CBM submission. With funding from Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the European Union, since early 2020 the ISU has conducted eleven online CBM training sessions at the national or sub-regional level or provided tailored assistance to States Parties upon their request. The support by the ISU is designed to respond to requests from these States Parties for assistance and guidance in preparing and submitting the annual CBM reports. National CBM experts from Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, South Africa and Switzerland have also participated in such training sessions and have shared their national experiences.

33. The level of participation in the CBMs has increased overall since the Eighth Review Conference with the highest ever number of CBMs received from 92 States Parties in 2021. This positive trend since the Eighth Review Conference is the result of the increased outreach efforts by the ISU and an overall heightened interest in CBM participation by States Parties.

34. More information on the status of participation in CBMs and the operation of the system since the Eighth Review Conference can be found in document BWC/CONF.IX/PC/3.

<sup>13</sup> See <https://bwc-ecbm.unog.ch/>.

## VI. Cooperation and assistance

### A. National reports on Article X implementation

35. The Seventh Review Conference encouraged States Parties to provide at least biannually appropriate information on how they implement Article X of the Convention to the ISU and requested the ISU to collate such information for the information of States Parties.<sup>14</sup> This call was reiterated by the Eighth Review Conference.<sup>15</sup> As the table below shows, the number of States Parties submitting such reports has been extremely low. A total of seven States Parties, and one group of States, have submitted at least one such report during the intersessional period. The ISU has collated the reports on the BWC website.<sup>16</sup>

<i>State/group</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>
Australia		X		
Cuba		X		
Germany			X	
G7 Global Partnership	X	X		
Republic of Korea	X		X	X
Russian Federation		X		X
United Kingdom	X		X	
United States		X		X
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>

### B. Cooperation and assistance database

36. The Seventh Review Conference decided to establish a “database system to facilitate requests for and offers of exchange of assistance and cooperation among States Parties”.<sup>17</sup> The Conference mandated the ISU to establish and administer a database where the requests and offers would be stored; to facilitate, on request, the exchange of information among States Parties relating to the database and any resulting cooperation and assistance activities; and to report to States Parties on the operation of the database detailing the offers made, requests sought and matches made during a calendar year.

37. As decided by the 2013 Meeting of States Parties, the offers of assistance are available on the public area of the BWC website, while the requests for assistance are available to States Parties in the restricted area of the website.<sup>18</sup> As of 31 January 2022, the database contained:

(a) A total of 69 current offers of assistance from ten States Parties (Canada, China, Cuba, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America) and one group of States Parties (the Australia Group).

(b) A total of 51 requests for assistance, including two requests which have been met, from 17 States Parties.

38. States Parties recognized, at the 2014 Meeting of States Parties, that usage of the database by States Parties has been “low”. In response, the Eighth Review Conference in 2016 tasked the ISU, with inputs to be provided by States Parties, to “seek to improve the database to ensure that it is more user-friendly and comprehensive, and ensure that specific,

<sup>14</sup> See BWC/CONF.VII/7, Section II, paragraph 61.

<sup>15</sup> See BWC/CONF.VIII/4, Section II, paragraph 71.

<sup>16</sup> See <https://www.un.org/disarmament/biological-weapons/assistance-and-cooperation/national-article-x-reports/>.

<sup>17</sup> See BWC/CONF.VII/7, Part III, paragraphs 17–20.

<sup>18</sup> See BWC/MSP/2013/5, paragraph 22(a).

timely and concrete offers of and requests for cooperation be provided by States Parties in the database”.<sup>19</sup> As reported in its 2017 annual report,<sup>20</sup> the ISU, based on inputs received from several States Parties and with a voluntary contribution from Ireland, therefore developed an entirely new database which was launched at the 2017 Meeting of States Parties and which has been operational since 2018. In 2021, UNODA received voluntary contributions from Norway and the Philippines to support the implementation of Article X. The contributions will be used to further improve the database to ensure that it is more user-friendly and comprehensive. This work will be undertaken in consultation with interested States Parties and will take account of the discussions at the 2018, 2019 and 2020 Meetings of Experts on Cooperation and Assistance, with a Particular Focus on Strengthening Cooperation and Assistance under Article X.

39. The ISU has also maintained regular contact with relevant assistance providers. For example, the ISU continued to work closely with providers of assistance for related national legislation and enforcement measures such as the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (OCT), the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC), the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the Committee established pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 1540.

40. The ISU continued to promote and provide information on the database, via specific presentations in its outreach activities. Offers continue to be publicly accessible, while the requests are still only accessible to States Parties on the restricted area of the new database’s webpage. There are more offers of assistance than requests, and this could be partly a result of the requests for assistance being placed on the restricted area of the BWC website. Nevertheless, one can also note that there are more States Parties requesting assistance (seventeen) than States Parties offering assistance (ten).

41. It has become apparent that some requesting States Parties opted for their needs to be addressed informally or on a bilateral level, rather than having the information appear in the database. Several match-making activities undertaken or facilitated by the ISU have been done informally upon instruction from the requesting State Party, hence they do not appear in the database. Another part of the problem may be the lack of precision in some of the requests and offers. A more structured approach to identifying needs and providing assistance as found in similar mechanisms, could remedy some of the existing problems. As stated above, the ISU will make use of funds provided by Norway and the Philippines to ensure that the database is more user-friendly and comprehensive. In accordance with the decision of the Eighth Review Conference, the operation of the database will be reviewed at the Ninth Review Conference.

42. The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the relevance of the Convention. The pandemic has not only illustrated the great importance of health system preparedness, whether on the national, regional, or global level, but it has also highlighted the need to improve the current cooperation and assistance systems available. In that perspective, the ISU will continue working to further harness the potential of the cooperation and assistance database. Since the beginning of the pandemic, States Parties, especially developing States, have expressed increased interest in Article X and the potential benefits it could bring. The ISU has made use of this momentum to further promote Article X, as well as the beneficial aspects of biological sciences and technology.

43. The ISU expects that funds received in support of Article X activities and the cooperation and assistance database will further help developing States Parties to receive assistance from developed States Parties and appropriate international and regional organizations to enable them to build national capacities relevant to the Convention.

<sup>19</sup> See [BWC/CONF.VIII/4](#), part III, paragraph 9.

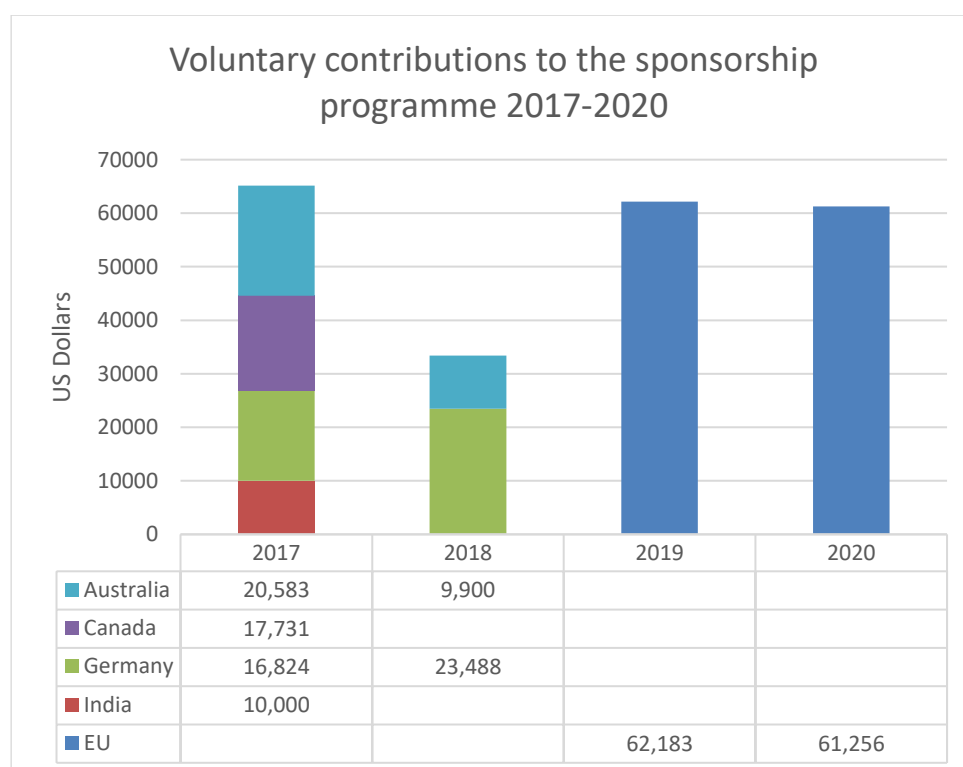
<sup>20</sup> See [BWC/MSP/2017/4](#), paragraph 29.

### C. Sponsorship programme

44. The Seventh Review Conference established a sponsorship programme to "support and increase the participation of developing States Parties in the meetings of the intersessional programme".<sup>21</sup> The programme is funded by voluntary contributions from States Parties in a position to provide them and is administered by the ISU in consultation with the members of the BWC bureau. Criteria for selection were also agreed by the Seventh Review Conference, namely that priority for sponsorship would be given to those States Parties which have previously not participated in the meetings, or have been unable to regularly send experts from capital. In addition, sponsorship may also be provided, depending upon the availability of resources, to enhance participation of States not party in order to promote universalization of the Convention.

45. The chart below shows the voluntary contributions that have been made to the sponsorship programme between 2017 and 2020. European Union Council Decision 2019/97 included substantial funds to support the sponsorship programme in 2019, 2020 and 2021. It should be noted that the United States of America sponsored participation by national experts through bilateral arrangements outside of the sponsorship programme administered by the ISU.

**Figure V**



46. As the chart above shows, voluntary contributions to the sponsorship programme have varied in their regularity and amounts. This makes it hard for the ISU to predict how many national experts can be sponsored to attend a particular meeting and likewise means that national experts lack predictability concerning their attendance. This complicates travel arrangements and the preparations by national experts. Predictability for States Parties could be improved, for example, by the inclusion of a budget line for the sponsorship programme in the approved budget of a future intersessional programme funded from assessed contributions.

47. The unpredictability of voluntary contributions to the sponsorship programme has had an impact on the number of experts able to be supported. The chart below provides details of

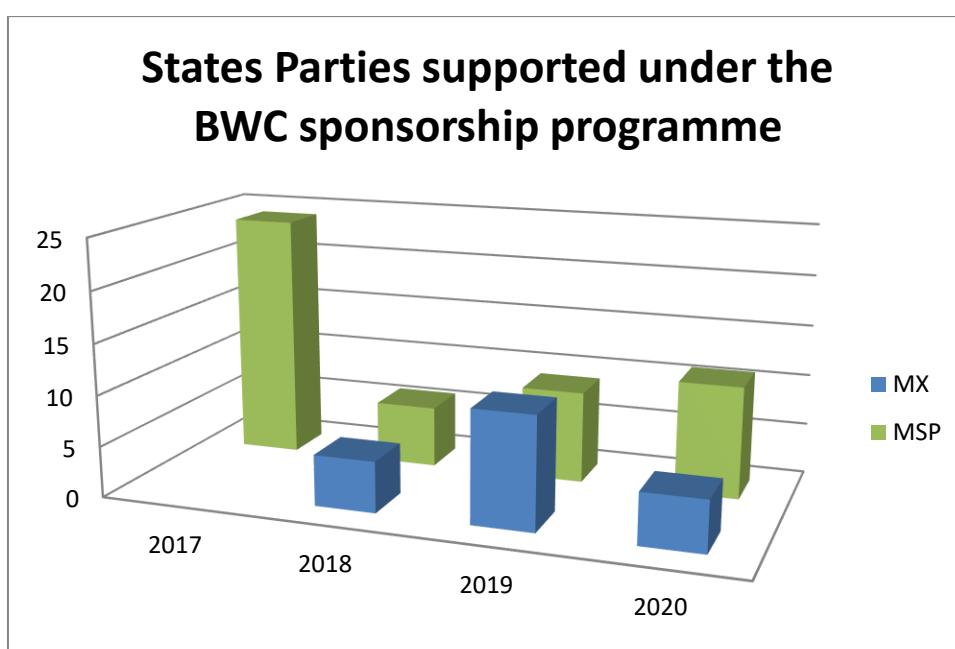
<sup>21</sup> See [BWC/CONF.VII/7](#), Part III, paragraph 21.

the number of experts supported for the Meetings of Experts and Meetings of States Parties between 2017 and 2020.

48. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant postponement of the meetings in 2020, the sponsorship programme did not operate in 2020. European Union Council Decision 2019/97 included substantial funds to support the sponsorship programme in 2019, 2020 and 2021. The funds allocated for 2020 were instead used in 2021, and those allocated for 2021 will be used in 2022.

49. Due to ongoing travel restrictions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, only a limited sponsorship programme was operated for the 2020 Meetings of Experts which were held in August and September 2021. While a higher number of experts could be sponsored for the 2020 Meeting of States Parties which was held in November 2021 due to a slight improvement of the situation, the ISU hopes to be able to run a larger sponsorship programme for the meetings in 2022.

**Figure VI**



## **VII. Promotion of universalization**

50. The ISU supported the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairs in their activities to promote universalization, preparing correspondence and briefing material, and helping to organize outreach events. As reported in the annual ISU reports and also in the annual reports on the status of universalization of the Convention, the ISU accompanied the Chairpersons of the Meetings of States Parties to a number of bilateral meetings in Geneva with representatives of States not party and Signatory States. In advance of such meetings, the ISU prepared a universalization kit to be distributed to each of these States, as well as compiled background notes for the Chairperson.

51. The ISU provided information and advice to States Parties conducting their own outreach activities to promote universalization. The ISU also promoted universalization during the seminars and events which it organised or in which it participated, at which representatives of States not parties were present.

52. The promotion of universalization is an ongoing task which requires long-term commitment and resources and continuous engagement with States not party. The ISU would like to reiterate its appreciation for all those who have supported its efforts towards universal adherence as described in the background document on the status of universalization of the

Convention.<sup>22</sup> Positive results can only be achieved through cooperation and efficient coordination among all relevant stakeholders, including the successive Chairpersons, States Parties, relevant international organizations and non-governmental organizations, as well as the ISU.

53. While bilateral contacts with States not party can be extremely impactful, they should be combined with concerted efforts from all relevant stakeholders and through regional and multilateral fora and activities. To maximize concerted efforts and avoid unnecessary overlapping activities, regular reporting from all relevant stakeholders on any activities and initiatives related to universalization is instrumental to a comprehensive understanding and targeted approach.

54. Further details on the status of universalization and progress since the Eighth Review Conference can be found in document BWC/CONF.IX/PC/7.

## **VIII. Conclusions**

55. The mandate of the ISU has proved to be adequately broad in practice, and has not caused any operational problems for the Unit in responding to requests from States Parties, or in dealing with other organisations. Compared to previous intersessional programmes, the ISU has been able to respond to many more requests from developing States Parties and participated in more events. This has been possible not least due to the considerable increase in voluntary contributions received from States Parties. Nevertheless, the ISU still had to decline a number of invitations from States Parties because of lack of available staff, or insufficient travel funds.

56. The ISU operated for almost one year during the intersessional programme with reduced staffing capacity. Unfortunately, the current funding arrangements for the ISU do not permit the recruitment of temporary staff to cover such gaps. With such a small staff, the temporary absence of just one staff member can have a significant impact on the ISU's ability to respond effectively to requests from States Parties.

57. During 2020 and 2021, the activities of the ISU were severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of the ISU's work, particularly to support the implementation of the Convention in developing States Parties, relies on physical participation in events and travel to States Parties, none of which has been possible since early 2020. However, the ISU has adapted its ways of working and conducted many activities online since spring 2020. While there are some downsides to virtual events, this shift has enabled the ISU to conduct more activities on a wider geographical basis and for a lower cost than had previously been the case. The ISU will continue to utilize such tools in the future, as appropriate.

58. The ISU would like to record its appreciation for the cooperation and support of States Parties in the course of its operations since the Eighth Review Conference.

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<sup>22</sup> See BWC/CONF.IX/PC/7.