

AIDE MEMOIRE

**Third Session of the Working Group
on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention
(4-8 December 2023)
&
2023 Meeting of States Parties to the Biological Weapons
Convention
(11-13 December 2023)**



United Nations Office at Geneva

Palais des Nations

Geneva, Switzerland

Introduction

1. The third session of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention will take place from 4 to 8 December 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland. The Working Group will be chaired by H.E. Ambassador Flavio Damico of Brazil. The Vice-Chairs of the Working Group are H.E. Ambassador Camille Petit of France and Mr. Irakli Jgenti of Georgia.
2. The 2023 Meeting of States Parties will take place from 11 to 13 December 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland. The Meeting of States Parties will be chaired by H.E. Ambassador Cristian Espinosa Cañizares of Ecuador. The Vice-Chairs of the Meeting of States Parties are H.E. Ambassador Thomas Göbel of Germany and Mr. Nikola Yakov of Bulgaria.
3. Both meetings will convene in the E Building of the Palais des Nations, United Nations Office at Geneva. Sessions will take place from 10:00-13:00 and 15:00-18:00 on the abovementioned dates in the following conference rooms:
 - Third session of the Working Group: Room XVII
 - Meeting of States Parties: Room XVIII
4. The agenda of the Working Group, as adopted at its first session is available online as document [BWC/WG/1/1](#).
5. The agenda of the Meeting of States Parties will be made available online as document BWC/MSP/2023/1 in due course.
6. Additional documents and other information will be posted, as they become available, on the relevant pages of the [UNODA Meetings Place](#).
7. This aide-memoire has been prepared by the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) and provides practical information for participants. The information contained in this document is correct as of the time of writing (18 October 2023).

Registration

8. Formal credentials are not required for these two meetings. Instead, all participants must register by **17 November 2023**, and follow the steps described below in accordance with the [BWC Rules of Procedure](#):
 - a) In accordance with Rule 1, States Parties wishing to participate should send, through their Permanent Missions, a letter or note verbale to the ISU notifying the full names and titles of the members of the delegation. The head of delegation should be clearly indicated. Only the names of participants listed in the letter or note verbale will be included in the official lists of participants of the third session of the Working Group and of the 2023 Meeting of States Parties.
 - b) In accordance with Rule 44.1, Signatory States wishing to participate should send, through their Permanent Missions, a letter or note verbale to the ISU notifying the full names and titles of the members of the delegation. The head of delegation should be clearly indicated. Only the names of participants listed in the letter or note verbale will

be included in the official lists of participants of the third session of the Working Group and of the 2023 Meeting of States Parties.

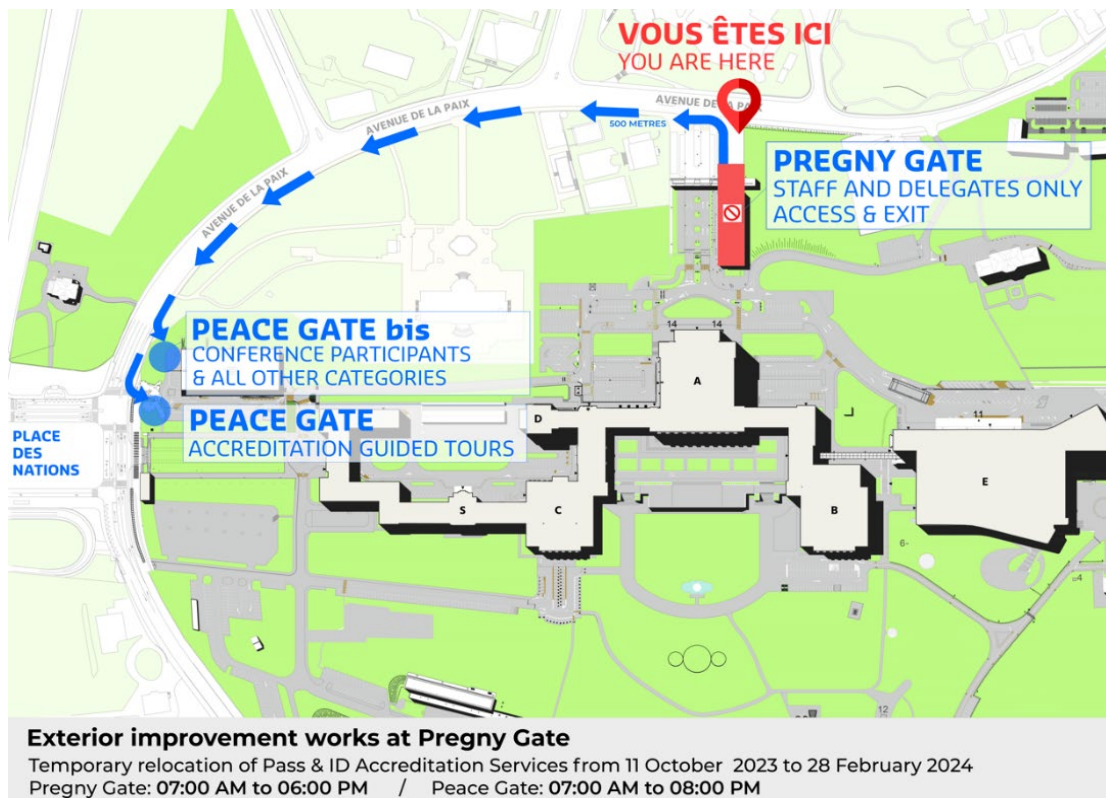
- c) In accordance with Rule 44.2(a), States which are neither parties nor signatories to the Convention may apply to participate. Observer status is granted by the decision of the meeting at its opening session. A letter or note verbale should be addressed, through their Permanent Missions, to the ISU applying for observer status and listing the full names and titles of the members of the delegation. The head of delegation should be clearly indicated. Only the names of participants listed in the letter or note verbale will be included in the official lists of participants of the third session of the Working Group and of the 2023 Meeting of States Parties.
 - d) In accordance with Rule 44.4, international organizations may apply to participate as observer agencies. Observer agency status is granted by the decision of the meeting at its opening session. A letter or note verbale should be addressed to the ISU applying for observer agency status, listing the full names and titles of the members of the delegation. The name of the head of delegation should be clearly indicated. Only the names of participants listed in the letter or note verbale will be included in the official lists of participants of the third session of the Working Group and of the 2023 Meeting of States Parties.
 - e) In accordance with Rule 44.5, NGOs and academic institutions may register to attend public sessions of the meetings. A letter on the official letterhead of the organization should be addressed to the ISU applying for attendance of the public sessions and listing the full names and titles of the representatives who will attend. NGOs and academic institutions that have not previously attended a BWC meeting should indicate previous interactions between the organization and the United Nations in relation to disarmament and non-proliferation issues. A mission statement or summary of work of the organization should be provided. Only the names of participants listed in the letter will be included in the official lists of participants of the third session of the Working Group and of the 2023 Meeting of States Parties.
9. In order to promote gender equality, all States Parties, Signatory States, States not Party, international organizations and non-governmental organizations are strongly encouraged to strive for gender balance within their own delegations.
10. *Notes verbales* and letters should be submitted no later than **17 November 2023**.

Access to the Palais des Nations

11. Participants already in possession of a long-term UN Geneva security badge can simply use the badge to access the Palais des Nations on the days of the meetings. There is no need for participants with a UN Geneva security badge to register online.

12. Participants not in possession of a long-term UN Geneva security badge must register online at <https://indico.un.org/event/1003812> by **17 November 2023** by following the steps below:¹

- a) Participants who have already registered for a previous meeting at UN Geneva can simply log in to their existing account and register for the third session of the Working Group and the 2023 Meeting of States Parties (one registration for both meetings).
- b) Participants registering for the first time will need to create a profile and provide details of their passport or national identification card and upload a passport quality photo.
- c) All participants registering online will need to upload a copy of the *note verbale* or letter from their delegation. Registration cannot be completed without the required documents.
- d) Please note that a new digital badging system was introduced at the Palais des Nations on 1 September 2023. Once an online registration has been approved, the participant will receive a digital badge via e-mail. Once downloaded to a mobile phone or other mobile device, the digital badge will enable faster entry to the Palais des Nations. Nevertheless, participants are still advised to come to the Palais des Nations well in advance to allow enough time for security checks.
- e) On arrival, the digital badge will need to be activated. The Pregny Pavilion is closed due to exterior improvement works until the end of February 2024. Therefore, all conference participants without long-term security badges must go to the Peace Gate Bis which is open from 08:00 until 17:00 Monday to Friday. See the map below for



¹ Help with the registration process can be found at <https://indicohelp.unog.ch/> For any queries, please contact the Implementation Support Unit at bwc@un.org

directions and also this [webpage](#). Delegates and staff members with long-term security badges can still enter and exit via the Pregny Gate.

- f) Participants will be asked to scan their digital badges on the readers at the badging desks and present a piece of valid photo identification. Once verified, the digital badge will be activated, allowing participants to enter the Palais des Nations for the duration stated.
- g) Participants who do not have a mobile phone or other mobile device can print their confirmation and bring it to the badging desk at the Peace Gate Bis to have a paper badge issued and printed.
- h) Delegations from States and international organisations can activate their digital badges at the Peace Gate Bis as of 12:00 on 1 December 2023. Please bring a copy of the delegations' *note verbale* and the UN Event Pass received after the online registration to facilitate the process.
- i) NGO representatives can activate their digital badges in person from 08:00 on 4 December 2023 at the Peace Gate Bis. A valid passport or national identification card will have to be produced along with the digital badge. Only representatives who have registered online and whose names have been properly included in the letter described above will be granted a digital badge.
- j) Inside the Palais des Nations, participants may be requested to present their digital badge to a security officer or a conference organizer, who will have a portable device on hand to confirm their access rights.

Attending the Working Group and the Meeting of States Parties

- 13. All formal meetings of the Working Group will take place in Room XVII and all formal meetings of the Meeting of States Parties will take place in Room XVIII (see map below). Details of the meetings scheduled for each day can be found on the screens opposite Door 40 in the E Building.
- 14. Simultaneous interpretation into the six official UN languages will be provided in the main conference room and via the live webcast on [UN Web TV](#). The video recordings will also be archived on UN Web TV to be watched later. Live audio from the meetings in any of the six official languages can also be accessed via the [Listen Live](#) website and audio recordings will be available soon after the end of each session via the [Digital Recordings Portal](#). Automatically generated transcripts of the public sessions in English, French and Spanish will be available on the “Digital Recordings” page accessible from <https://indico.un.org/event/1003812>
- 15. An up-to-date timetable of events, including formal meetings, side events and informal sessions will be available on the [UNODA Meetings Place](#).
- 16. Electronic boards outside each meeting room will clearly indicate whether the session in progress is public or private. All interested parties can attend public sessions. Private meetings are for States Parties only.

17. Food and drinks are strictly prohibited in the conference rooms. Activities involving food and drinks are allowed only in the areas designated for this purpose.

Documentation

18. Prior to the meetings, pre-session documents will be made available on the relevant pages of the [UNODA Meetings Place](#). During the meetings, in-session documents will be made available on [UNODA Meetings Place](#) as they are issued. Paper copies of documents will not be issued in the conference room.
19. States Parties wishing to submit working papers to the meetings should do so by **17 November 2023** by sending Microsoft Word versions to the Implementation Support Unit at bwc@un.org. Please get in touch to discuss any specific requirements. Working papers are not translated or edited but delegations are able to submit courtesy translations into English if they so wish.
20. States and international organizations granted observer status may also wish to provide information to delegations at the meetings. Documents should be submitted in electronic and hard copy to the Implementation Support Unit. Electronic copies should be sent to bwc@un.org

Presentations and interventions

21. Delegations can deliver national statements, introduce working papers, and make interventions from the floor. Delegations wishing to take the floor during the meetings are requested to contact the Implementation Support Unit in advance. Copies of presentations etc. should be sent to the Implementation Support Unit at bwc@un.org. To assist the interpreters, copies of statements should also be sent to speeches@un.org
22. Practical information for speakers and participants in the meetings can be found at <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/conference-management/participant>

Side events

23. Room availability is limited because of the ongoing renovations of the Palais des Nations under the Strategic Heritage Plan. Side-events will be held in Rooms XXIV and XXV (both also in the E Building).
24. Potential side event organizers are kindly requested to fill in the [online request form](#). All applications will be reviewed and submitted for approval to the BWC office-holders.

Rooms and facilities for participants

25. Private meetings for regional groups or other groups of States Parties will depend on room availability. Regional groups coordinators are invited to contact the Implementation Support Unit well in advance, preferably at least two weeks before the meetings. The Implementation Support Unit will assist the coordinators of the regional groups with the announcements for such meetings and participants are kindly invited to check the notice boards and the [UNODA Meetings Place](#) regularly for additional details.
26. Free Wi-Fi access is available in the meeting rooms and throughout the Palais des Nations.
27. Photocopying facilities will not be available to participants.
28. The closest cafeteria is the Serpent Bar which can be found behind Room XVIII on the first floor of the E Building.
29. A UBS bank is located at Door 41 on the second floor of Building E and the SAFI (a general shop) can be found at Door 1, S Building (see [map](#)).

BWC Sponsorship Programme

30. To support and increase the participation of developing States Parties² in annual BWC meetings, the Ninth Review Conference decided to renew the Sponsorship Programme established by the Seventh Review Conference.
31. The Sponsorship Programme is administered by the Implementation Support Unit in consultation with the office-holders and is funded this year by voluntary contributions from Canada, France, the Republic of Korea, Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
32. The deadline for applications to the Sponsorship Programme for the 2023 BWC meetings was 15 September 2023 and applications are therefore now closed.
33. Further information about the Sponsorship Programme for the 2023 BWC meetings can be found [here](#).

Practical information

34. The map below shows the main conference rooms, entrances, and facilities within the Palais des Nations. It also shows the nearest bus and tram stops outside the Palais des Nations. A more detailed version of the map is also [available online](#).

² Please refer to the DAC List of ODA Recipients at <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/daclist.htm>



35. Additional practical information covering access for people with disabilities, public transport, parking and taxis is available at <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/practical-information/delegates>
36. Participants should also note that due to the ongoing renovations of the Palais des Nations several entrances are currently closed and alternative circulation routes will have to be used. More information is available at <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/about/map/circulation>

Hotel accommodation and visas

37. The Implementation Support Unit cannot offer financial or logistical support to assist with travel to, accommodation during, or other costs related to attending the meetings, except for experts selected under the [BWC Sponsorship Programme](#). Practical information about accommodation in Geneva can be found on the website of the [Geneva Welcome Centre](#).
38. Participants are responsible for making their own arrangements for visas, travel and related costs. Further information relating to the procedures and measures concerning the issuance of visas for Switzerland is available by contacting the Swiss embassy or consulate in the participant's country of residence or by referring to the [website](#) of the Swiss Federal Office for Migration. Further information is available from the [Permanent Mission of Switzerland](#).

Participants' behaviour at UN system events

39. The organizations of the United Nations system are committed to enabling events at which everyone can participate in an inclusive, respectful and safe environment. UN system events are guided by the highest ethical and professional standards, and all participants are expected to behave with integrity and respect towards all participants attending or involved with any UN system event.
40. Advancing the Secretary-General's "zero tolerance" vision, and priority agenda to address sexual harassment in the workplace, a [Model Code of Conduct](#) has been developed to

prevent harassment, including sexual harassment, at UN system events. The Model Code of Conduct applies to all participants of any BWC meetings.

41. The [Model Code of Conduct](#) is not a legal document but aims to prevent harassment from occurring at UN system events by sharing expectations of standards of conduct in advance of an event, as well as to support victims by ensuring they are aware that harassment is not tolerated at UN system events and what steps they can take if they are harassed or witness harassment.

Secretariat

42. Further enquiries regarding attendance and participation in the Working Group and the Meeting of States Parties should be addressed to:

BWC Implementation Support Unit
United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs
United Nations Office at Geneva
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland
Email: bwc@un.org