

# **ISU international cooperation and assistance activities**

**Second meeting of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the BWC**  
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## ISU mandate

- Implement the decision to establish and administer the database system for assistance requests and offers, and facilitate the associated exchange of information among States Parties
- Administration of the BWC sponsorship programme
- Receipt of national reports on implementation of Article X
- Provide support for the comprehensive implementation and universalization of the Convention
- Support implementation by States Parties of the decisions and recommendations of the Review Conference

# BWC Cooperation and Assistance Database

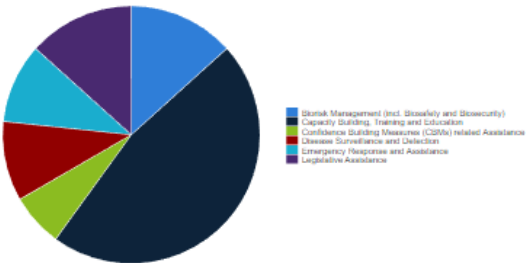
- Seventh Review Conference (2011) decided to establish a “database system to facilitate requests for and offers of exchange of assistance and cooperation among States Parties”
- Eighth Review Conference (2016) tasked the ISU to make the Database more user-friendly and comprehensive
- New Database therefore launched at the 2017 MSP
- ISU tasks:
  - establish and administer the database
  - facilitate, on request, the exchange of information among States Parties relating to the database and any resulting cooperation and assistance activities
  - report to States Parties on the operation of the database detailing the offers made, requests sought and matches made during a calendar year

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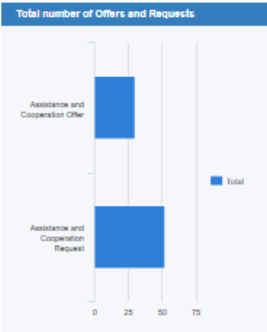
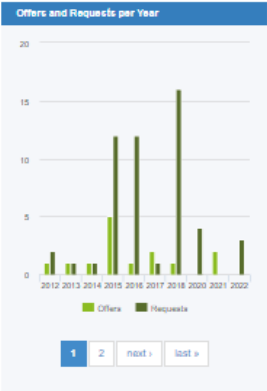
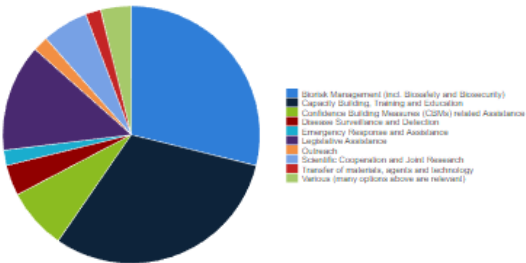
## ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION DATABASE

The Assistance and Cooperation Database is a secure web-based platform for BWC States Parties. Facilitating the full implementation of Article X, this platform enables States Parties to submit requests and offers for assistance and cooperation on a voluntary basis individually or in collaboration with other states or international organizations. These exchanges may include requests and offers for equipment or information regarding the peaceful use of biological and toxin agents.

Offers by Category



Requests by Category



- Apparent that some requesting SPs 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 SP, which do not appear in the database
- **Funding from Norway and the Philippines** received to **further improve the database**
- **Validation process of offers and requests initiated in 2023**

Category	Total	Number of States Parties
Offers	30	10 States Parties Canada, China, Cuba, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Russia, UK, US and one group of States Parties
Requests	50	17 States Parties
Reported Matches	2	

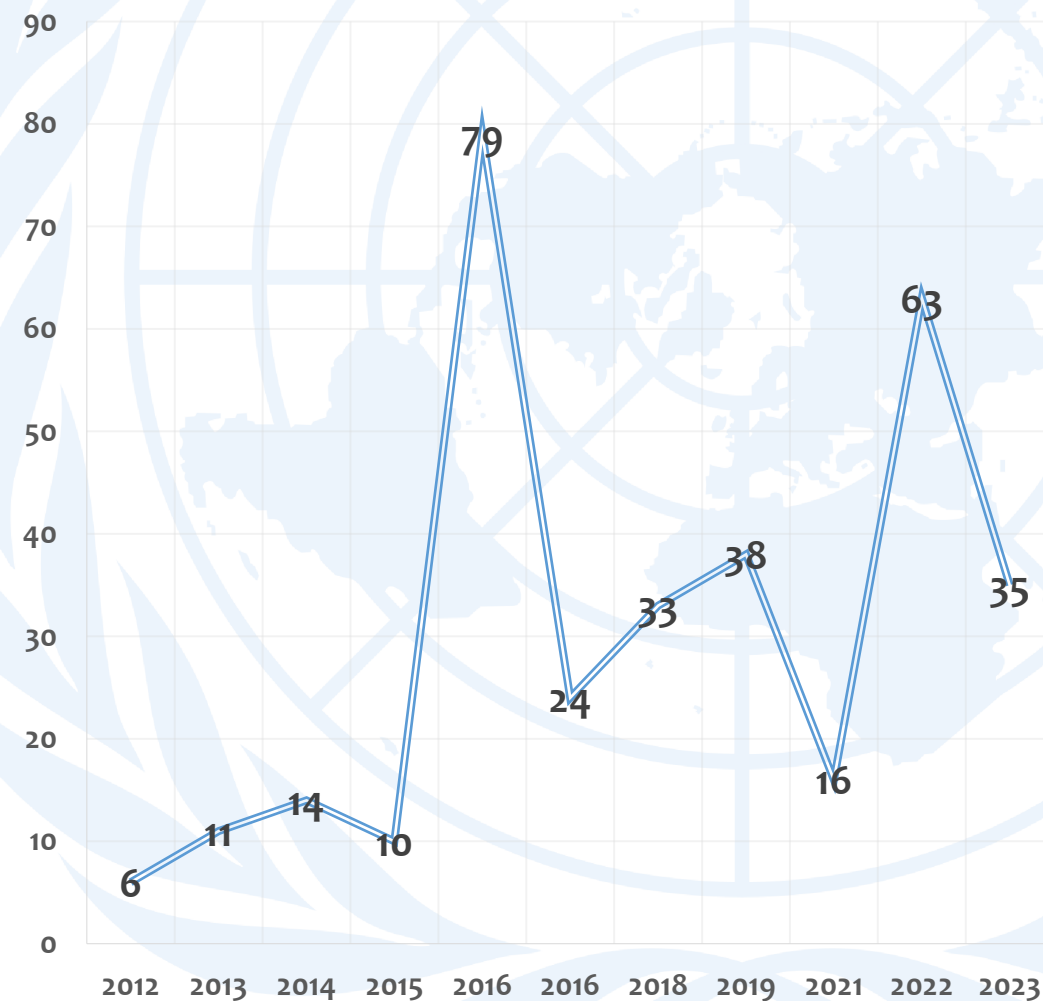
# BWC Sponsorship Programme



- Established by the Seventh Review Conference and renewed by the Eighth and Ninth Review Conference
- Funded by voluntary contributions from donors in a position to provide them
- Administered by the ISU in consultation with the Chairperson and Vice-chairpersons of the MSP
- Priority for sponsorship will be given to those States Parties which have previously not participated in the meetings, or have been unable to regularly send experts from capital
- Sponsorship may also be provided, depending on the availability of resources, to enhance participation of states not party in order to promote universalization of the Convention

# BWC Sponsorship Programme 2012-2023

- Support provided to 329 experts from 83 developing States:
  - Male: 219 (67%)
  - Female: 110 (33%)
- Total expenditures: \$ 1,141,327 (2012-2023)
- Average cost per participant: \$3,470
- Funding from 13 donors: Australia, Canada, EU, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Ireland, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, UK
- Bilateral support





# National reports on Article X implementation

- Seventh Review Conference (2011) 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.
- This call was reiterated by the Eighth Review Conference (2016)
- Overall number of submissions remains very low with most reports being submitted by donor States
- No collective consideration of submitted reports



# Youth for Biosecurity Initiative

- Aligned with Article X to impart knowledge and skills to young life scientists from the Global South to bolster their role in global biosafety and biosecurity
- A space for the perspectives of the new generation of biosecurity professionals has been created and youth expertise has been leveraged
- Three annual Biosecurity Diplomacy Workshops organized in 2019, 2021 and 2022
- The first Youth For Biosecurity Fellowship launched in 2023 and currently ongoing. Over 800 applications for the 2023 edition
- A network of 100 alumni from 48 countries in the Global South, 56% of which are young women scientists
- Impact: some Y4B alumni have joined their national delegation in BWC meetings, the Nigeria Y4B alumni produced a handbook on biosecurity and biosafety for high schools, national awareness-raising events organized by alumni over the world





# Tailored regional approach in Africa

- Response to large number of requests from African States and willingness from donors to provide sustained funding
- Since April 2022, three sub-regional events (Eastern, Central and Northern Africa) and four national events have been organized
- In addition to regular consultations with States, legal assistance is also on-going with five States, including through desktop review of existing legislation
- Already provided concrete results, including an additional three States submitting CBMs and nine States designating NCPs for the first time
- Eight additional national or sub-regional activities in the remainder of 2023 and discussions with 14 States about activities in 2024

# Creating a national inventory of dangerous pathogens

- Assistance provided by the Netherlands to Sri Lanka for the establishment of a National Inventory of Dangerous Pathogens (NIDP) in 2022.
- Transfer of the NIDP software designed by the Netherlands' biosecurity office at no-cost to Sri Lanka
- Standardized step-by-step approach for the establishment of a NIDP including awareness-raising activities on dual-use risk assessment, laboratory inspection and specific training on the establishment and maintenance of a NIDP provided to Sri Lanka
- One virtual training session followed by two in-person trainings between May and November 2022
- Cooperation between the Netherlands and Mongolia on the establishment of a NIDP initiated in July 2023





# Capacity-building on virus detection and biosecurity

- Twenty-one experts, thirteen of them women, from twenty developing States Parties
- Hosted by the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology in Trieste in June 2023
- To provide technical assistance to developing States Parties and foster cooperation on issues relating to the implementation of Article X
- Second course in November 2023

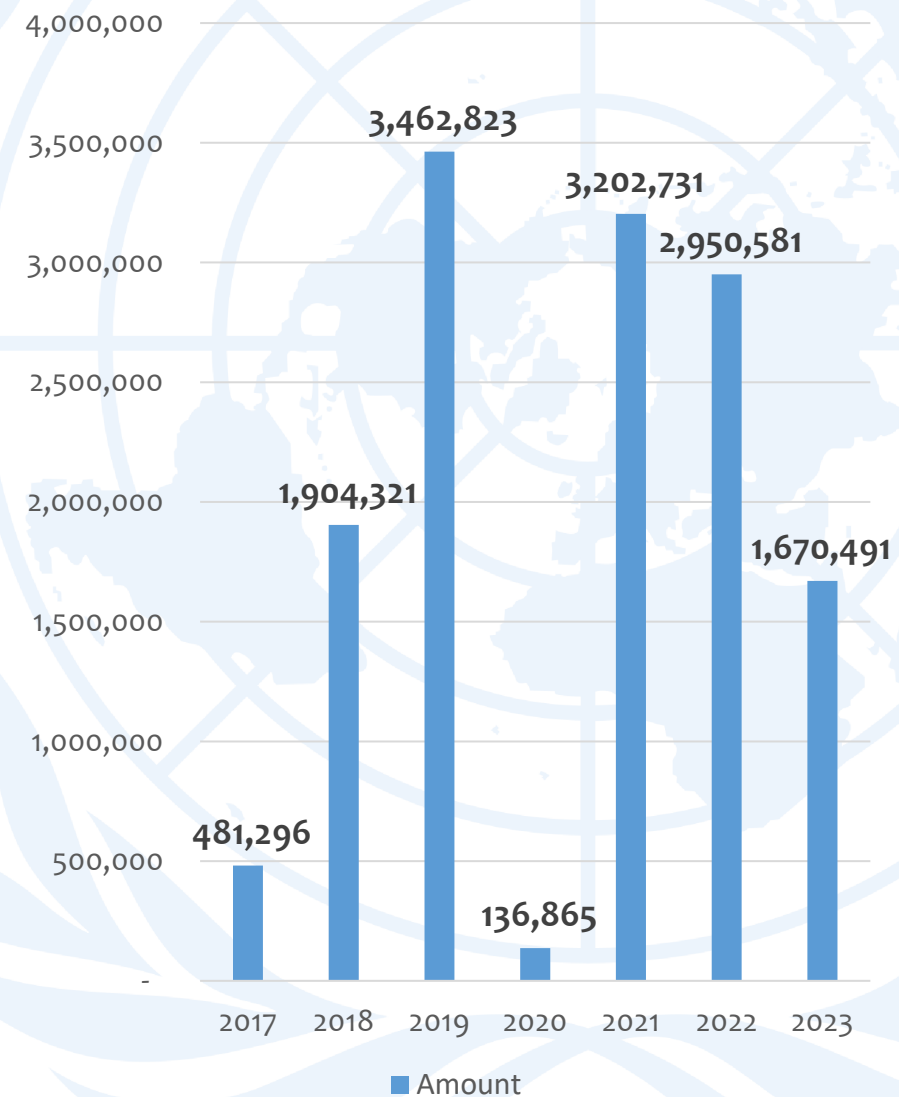


# Partnerships in international cooperation and assistance activities

- Engagement with a broad range of actors:
  - States Parties (donors, in-kind expertise, regional champions etc)
  - International organizations (e.g. EU, ICGEB, WHO, WOAHA)
  - UN organizations (e.g. UNODA (and its regional centres), UNIDIR, UNOCT, UNODC, UNICRI, UNSCR 1540 SU)
  - Regional organizations (e.g. AU, Africa CDC, ASEAN Secretariat, EU CBRN COE Initiative, IGAD, OAS, OSCE, RACVIAC)
  - NGOs (e.g. GHS, IFBA, iGEM, NTI, PGA, VERTIC)
  - Academia (e.g. JHCHS)

# Financial issues

- No dedicated ISU budget to support capacity-building activities
- Seventh RevCon noted SPs could make voluntary contributions to the ISU:
  - Significant increase over the last years: USD 13.8m received from 13 SPs or group of SPs (EU, Global Partnership) since 2017
  - Some of the voluntary contributions are short-term in nature
  - Challenging to address long-term needs from SPs
  - Funds often earmarked for specific events, activities or regions – challenge to respond to individual requests from SPs on a broad geographical basis





# Lessons Identified I

- Each region is unique and comes with specific challenges and opportunities - tailored approaches and strategies are required
- Tangible results can be made (e.g. with regard to CBM submissions, nomination of NCPs, elaboration of NIDP, legislative assistance, universalization, etc.) through dedicated assistance
- No established procedure or mechanism in place under the BWC to identify the assistance needs of a given State
- BWC lacks dedicated funds to provide assistance or capacity-building activities, thus relies on extrabudgetary funds from donor States
- Importance of promoting South-South collaboration, including through facilitating exchanges of experiences and lessons learned among States Parties
- Ensure sustainable buy-in of policy/decision-makers in States to ensure that sufficient resources and attention are provided for BWC implementation. Buy-in from Permanent Missions in Geneva can contribute.

## Lessons Identified II

- Different perceptions about what type of assistance can usually be provided and large divergence compared to assistance provided in the nuclear and chemical domains by IAEA and OPCW
- Occasional difficulties to secure the interest of States Parties to engage in capacity-building activities for longer periods of time
- Crucial role of BWC NCPs in promoting and coordinating assistance and cooperation opportunities under Article X
- Occasional disconnect between the scientific/technical and the diplomatic/policy making communities in relation to operationalizing Article X
- Some challenges in the provision of technical assistance through third parties (no agreements in place with partner organizations to cooperate on the provision of assistance in a formalized way)

# Key Suggestions

- Need for a programmatic and holistic approach towards international cooperation and assistance (ranging from identification and analysis to implementation)
- Close collaboration with other partners is essential
- Synergies between the implementation of Article X and other Articles of the Convention (e.g. IV, VII) should be sought
- Need for dedicated staff (including admin staff) to implement and administer received contributions must not be overlooked
- Need for continuous, dedicated funding in order to implement and sustain capacity-building activities
- More support needed to meet requests for technical training and capacity-building

# For more information...



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



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