



2025/494

12.3.2025

COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2025/494

of 11 March 2025

in support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, its inter-sessional programme and the preparations for its Tenth Review Conference

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on European Union, and in particular Articles 28(1) and 31(1) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy,

Whereas:

- (1) On 12 December 2003, the European Council adopted the EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (the 'EU Strategy').
- (2) The Union is actively implementing the EU Strategy and giving effect to the measures listed in Chapter III thereof, in particular those measures related to the reinforcement, implementation and universalisation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC).
- (3) The 2022 Strategic Compass for Security and Defence refers to the persistent threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, and expresses the Union's objective of reinforcing concrete actions in support of the goals of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.
- (4) Within the framework of the EU Strategy, the Council has adopted in support of the BTWC Council Joint Actions 2006/184/CFSP⁽¹⁾ and 2008/858/CFSP⁽²⁾ and Council Decisions 2012/421/CFSP⁽³⁾, (CFSP) 2016/51⁽⁴⁾, (CFSP) 2019/97⁽⁵⁾, (CFSP) 2021/2033⁽⁶⁾, (CFSP) 2023/123⁽⁷⁾ and (CFSP) 2024/349⁽⁸⁾. That Union support should be continued.
- (5) The technical implementation of this Decision should be entrusted to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA),

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

1. In the context of the implementation of the EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy and the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, the Union shall further support the activities of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) through an operational action in support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), its inter-sessional programme and preparations for the Tenth Review Conference (the 'action').

- ⁽¹⁾ Council Joint Action 2006/184/CFSP of 27 February 2006 in support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, in the framework of the EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (OJ L 65, 7.3.2006, p. 51, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/joint_action/2006/184/oj).
- ⁽²⁾ Council Joint Action 2008/858/CFSP of 10 November 2008 in support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), in the framework of the implementation of the EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (OJ L 302, 13.11.2008, p. 29, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/joint_action/2008/858/oj).
- ⁽³⁾ Council Decision 2012/421/CFSP of 23 July 2012 in support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), in the framework of the EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (OJ L 196, 24.7.2012, p. 61, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2012/421/oj>).
- ⁽⁴⁾ Council Decision (CFSP) 2016/51 of 18 January 2016 in support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) in the framework of the EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (OJ L 12, 19.1.2016, p. 50, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2016/51/oj>).
- ⁽⁵⁾ Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/97 of 21 January 2019 in support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention in the framework of the EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (OJ L 19, 22.1.2019, p. 11, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2019/97/oj>).
- ⁽⁶⁾ Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/2033 of 19 November 2021 amending Decision (CFSP) 2019/97 in support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention in the framework of the EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (OJ L 415, 22.11.2021, p. 29, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2021/2033/oj>).
- ⁽⁷⁾ Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/123 of 17 January 2023 amending Decision (CFSP) 2019/97 in support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention in the framework of the EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (OJ L 16, 18.1.2023, p. 34, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2023/123/oj>).
- ⁽⁸⁾ Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/349 of 16 January 2024 in support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (OJ L, 2024/349, 17.1.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2024/349/oj>).

2. The objectives of the action shall be:
 - (a) to support the BTWC inter-sessional programme by facilitating the discussions taking place within the Working Group on the Strengthening of the BTWC as well as the preparations for the Tenth Review Conference in 2027.
 - (b) to strengthen implementation of the Convention by building on the achievements of previous Council Decisions (CFSP).
3. A detailed description of the action is set out in the Annex to this Decision.

Article 2

1. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (the 'High Representative') shall be responsible for the implementation of this Decision.
2. The technical implementation of the activities referred to in Article 1(1) shall be carried out by UNODA.
3. UNODA shall perform the task referred to in paragraph 2 under the responsibility of the High Representative. For that purpose, the High Representative shall enter into the necessary arrangements with UNODA.

Article 3

1. The financial reference amount intended to cover the expenditure related to the implementation of the action (the 'expenditure') shall be EUR 1 474 753,82.
2. The expenditure shall be managed in accordance with the rules and procedures applicable to the general budget of the Union.
3. The Commission shall supervise the proper management of the expenditure. For that purpose, it shall conclude a contribution agreement with UNODA (the 'agreement'). The agreement shall stipulate that UNODA is to ensure the visibility of the Union's contribution, appropriate to its size.
4. The Commission shall endeavour to conclude the agreement as soon as possible after the entry into force of this Decision. It shall inform the Council of any difficulties in that process and of the date of conclusion of the agreement.

Article 4

1. The High Representative shall report to the Council on the implementation of this Decision on the basis of regular reports by UNODA. Those reports shall form the basis of the evaluation carried out by the Council.
2. The Commission shall provide information on the financial aspects of the implementation of the action.

Article 5

1. This Decision shall enter into force on the date of its adoption.
2. This Decision shall expire 36 months after the conclusion of the agreement. However, it shall expire 6 months after the date of its entry into force if the agreement has not been concluded within that period.

Done at Brussels, 11 March 2025.

For the Council

The President

A. DOMAŃSKI

ANNEX

**Project Document related to a Council Decision
in support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, its inter-sessional programme and the
preparations for its Tenth Review Conference**

1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) is a key element in the international community's efforts to address the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The BTWC is currently at an important crossroads, as reflected in the ambitious inter-sessional programme on which the BTWC States Parties agreed upon at the Ninth Review Conference held in 2022 and the re-emergence of topics such as verification on the agenda. The support of the intersessional programme, including the preparation of the Tenth Review Conference, at which decisions could be taken towards the strengthening of the BTWC, are therefore of critical importance.

The BTWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) also continues to receive requests for assistance from States Parties for dedicated training for BTWC National Contact Points (NCPs) which surpass its capacities and available funds.

For these reasons and for the purpose of giving immediate and practical application to some elements of the EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, this project will serve as an operational policy tool to support the current inter-sessional programme, the preparations of the Tenth Review Conference and dedicated trainings and fora for exchange for BTWC National Contact Points (NCPs).

2. OBJECTIVES

The proposed Council Decision will have two main objectives.

The first main objective of the Council Decision will be to support the BTWC inter-sessional programme by facilitating the discussions taking place within the Working Group on the Strengthening of the BTWC, which was created by the Ninth Review Conference in 2022 (see BTWC/CONF.IX/9), as well as the preparations for the Tenth Review Conference in 2027.

The Working Group was mandated to address the following seven topics:

- a) Measures on international cooperation and assistance under Article X;
- b) Measures on scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention;
- c) Measures on confidence-building and transparency;
- d) Measures on compliance and verification;
- e) Measures on national implementation of the Convention;
- f) Measures on assistance, response and preparedness under Article VII;
- g) Measures on organizational, institutional and financial arrangements.

The Conference also decided to develop with a view to establishing a mechanism to facilitate and support the full implementation of international cooperation and assistance (ICA) under Article X and a mechanism to review and assess scientific and technological (S&T) developments relevant to the Convention and to provide States Parties with relevant advice. In order for these mechanisms to be established, the Working Group on the strengthening of the Convention will make appropriate recommendations.

The set of activities proposed below will facilitate the discussions in a flexible manner within the Working Group on the above listed mandated topics and on the establishment of the ICA and S&T mechanisms.

The second main objective of the Council Decision will be the strengthened implementation of the Convention by building on the achievements of Decision (CFSP) 2021/2072. These include an increased number of nominations of BTWC National Contact Points (NCPs) and higher numbers of submitted Confidence-building Measures (CBM) reports. Building on this momentum, dedicated training courses for newly appointed BTWC National Contact Points (NCPs) will be provided annually and a global NCP event will be organized in order to facilitate exchange and networking among NCPs.

The proposed Council Decision will complement the ongoing activities under Decision (CFSP) 2024/349 in support of the BTWC, which is being implemented by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) Geneva Branch, in close cooperation with the BTWC ISU. The main workstreams of Decision (CFSP) 2024/349 are reaching universalization of the BTWC in the Pacific region, assistance programmes to strengthen the implementation of the BTWC at national levels, creation of biosecurity networks among young scientists from the Global South, support for the intersessional programme through contributions to the BTWC Sponsorship Programme as well as the development of outreach and educational materials. The proposed support for the current BTWC inter-sessional programme and the preparations of the Tenth Review Conference as well as the conduct of capacity-building activities for NCPs thus constitute complementary workstreams.

As applicable, the proposed Council Decision will build upon achievements of past Joint Actions and Council Decisions in support of the BTWC, without duplicating any ongoing activities carried out under Decision (CFSP) 2024/349, as outlined above. During the implementation phase of the proposed Council Decision, best use will be made of possible synergies with Decision (CFSP) 2024/349.

This Council Decision will be guided by the following principles:

- (a) Making best use of the experience gained through Joint Actions 2006/184/CFSP and 2008/858/CFSP and Council Decisions 2012/421/CFSP, (CFSP) 2016/51, (CFSP) 2019/97 and (CFSP) 2021/2072;
- (b) Focusing on the outcomes of the Ninth Review Conference, supporting the new intersessional programme and the preparations of the Tenth Review Conference;
- (c) Supporting the Chairs of the BTWC meetings and making best use of the mandate of the BTWC ISU;
- (d) Encouraging local and regional ownership of the projects in order to ensure their long-term sustainability and to build a partnership between the European Union and third parties in the framework of the BTWC;
- (e) Contributing to the advancement of global peace and security- and health-related objectives through the effective implementation of the BTWC by its States Parties;
- (f) In line with UN policies, encourage equal geographical and gender representation in all project activities.

3. EXPECTED OUTPUTS AND ACTIVITIES

The EU shall support the following activities corresponding to measures of the EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction:

3.1. Activity 1 – Support for the BTWC inter-sessional programme by facilitating consultations and integrating scientific perspectives on topics under discussion

3.1.1. Purpose of the Activity

This activity will aim at supporting the active engagement of BTWC States Parties and observers in the inter-sessional programme from 2025 to 2026, as well as the efforts of the BTWC officeholders, Friends of the Chair and the BTWC ISU.

In light of the creation of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the BTWC by the Ninth Review Conference and the limited number of official meeting days accorded to the Working Group, this activity aims to facilitate the discussions on the topics within the Working Group's mandate.

3.1.2. Description of the Activity

To that end, support will be provided to consultations held in different formats - for example regional workshops or retreats for BTWC States Parties - on topics under discussion in the Working Group, for example on compliance and verification. Support to these consultations will facilitate the work of the Working Group and will help to build consensus on specific topics under discussion in a flexible manner. Which activities will be supported will be determined by UNODA/BTWC ISU in consultation with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Delegation of the European Union to the UN and other international organizations in Geneva.

In addition, the participation of dedicated experts in Working Group meetings might be sponsored, if necessary to allow for their participation. The sponsored experts will be expected to make critical contributions and enrich the deliberations within the Working Group.

This activity will also aim at facilitating the intersessional discussions on the review of scientific and technological developments of relevance to the Convention, including the discussions on the establishment of a review mechanism, as well as to enhance the inclusion of scientific approaches to other topics under discussion by the Working Group, such as for example on compliance and verification. In order to do so and building on the experiences made under the S&T pillar of Decision (CFSP) 2021/2072, under this activity a series of interactive and innovative 'Science for Diplomats' events will be organized in Geneva (whenever possible in conjunction with official BTWC meetings, but also in between official meetings). The events will bring together representatives from the scientific community, industry, academia, civil society as well as representatives from States Parties and observers.

The project team will continue to explore and work with the BTWC ISU on new topics aligned with Working Group priorities to foster knowledge expansion for the 'Science for Diplomats' initiative through the development of new papers, products, and training materials. These resources will be designed to address emerging challenges and opportunities, even those that have yet to be fully identified.

3.1.3. Expected Results of the Activity

1. The consultations held in different formats - for example regional workshops or retreats for BTWC States Parties and observers - on topics under discussion in the Working Group, are expected to inform and feed into the substantive discussions that will take place in the framework of the Working Group and during the Tenth Review Conference.
2. The sponsored experts will be expected to make critical contributions and enrich the deliberations within the Working Group with their expertise.
3. The 'Science for Diplomats' event series will aim at ensuring that policy makers are aware of how technological and scientific advances can both benefit and challenge the Convention as well as expose them to and increase their understanding of scientific approaches to topics under discussion in the Working Group. The event series will also provide an opportunity for the S&T community and industry to contribute to and support the diplomatic efforts to strengthen the BTWC. The events would be closely coordinated with the Chairperson of the Working Group, the Friends of the Chair and the EU Delegation in Geneva and would give them additional opportunities to hold informal consultations with States Parties as well as seek input and feedback from an extended range of actors.

3.2. Activity 2 – Capacity building for BTWC National Contact Points and supporting the inter-sessional discussions on national implementation and measures on confidence-building and transparency

3.2.1. Purpose of the Activity

This activity aims at building on the achievements of Decision (CFSP) 2021/2072 under which a dedicated training course for BTWC National Contact Points (NCPs) and e-learning tools were developed and a series of six regional training courses for NCPs were conducted (for States in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Central Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Middle East and North Africa).

This led to an increased number of NCP nominations during the implementation period of Decision (CFSP) 2021/2072, higher levels of interaction by UNODA/BTWC ISU with NCPs on the implementation of the Convention at the national level as well as to intensified exchanges of best practices among NCPs within and across regions. The training segments of the dedicated training course on the elaboration of Confidence-Building Measures (CBM) reports also contributed to steadily increasing numbers of submitted CBM reports since 2021.

The objective of this project is to strengthen the implementation of the BTWC by continuing to provide dedicated capacity-building to NCPs and engendering greater exchange and cooperation among them at the regional and international levels.

3.2.2. Description of the Activity

The proposed activity includes the provision of one training course per year to newly appointed BTWC NCPs. The training course will be held at UN Geneva in conjunction with an official BTWC meeting.

The activity also intends to continue to create opportunities for dialogue and exchange of information on the national implementation of the BTWC among the NCPs as well as on measures on confidence-building and transparency, including the sharing of best practices, through the organization of one global meeting attended by all BTWC NCPs. The global meeting will be held at UN Geneva, if possible in conjunction with an official BTWC meeting.

The annual training course and annual global meeting of all NCPs will also be used to support the intersessional programme, as they will provide valuable opportunities for the Chairperson of the Working Group as well as the Friends of the Chair to address specific topics under discussion, in particular on confidence-building and transparency and on national implementation of the Convention. Particular attention will be paid to identifying regional implementation challenges, for example those faced by States Parties in Africa, and empowering delegations from these regions to participate more actively in BTWC meetings. The training course will allow the Chairperson and the Friends of the Chair to gather NCPs' feedback, their suggested approaches and perspectives and to then feed these insights back into the deliberations of the Working Group.

3.2.3. Expected Results of the Activity

1. As a positive consequence of this training course, it is expected that through the continued availability of dedicated training opportunities for new NCPs, more States Parties will nominate NCPs.
2. It is also expected that the provided training will continue to result in higher numbers and quality of annually submitted Confidence-Building Measures reports, which will provide additional information on the status of the implementation of the Convention globally.
3. This activity is furthermore expected to facilitate information exchange and sharing of best practices between NCPs as well as to inform the ongoing discussions in the Working Group.
4. NCPs feedback will inform the discussions held in the framework of the BTWC Working Group on topics such as national implementation, confidence-building and transparency.

3.3. Activity 3 – Support to the preparations for the Tenth Review Conference

3.3.1. Purpose of the Activity

Building on Activity 1 and 2, this activity focuses on mobilising BTWC States Parties towards active participation in the Tenth Review Conference in 2027 by organising five regional workshops and by offering opportunities to reflect on and discuss key topics of the 2023-2026 inter-sessional programme with a view towards fostering areas of consensus.

3.3.2. Description of the Activity

In the lead up to the Tenth Review Conference and based on the experience gained under Decision (CFSP) 2019/97 on the organization of such events, five regional workshops will be organized for States Parties from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa and Europe and other Western States. These workshops will offer States Parties and BTWC office holders, including the President of the Tenth Review Conference, opportunities to reflect on and discuss key topics in preparation for the Review Conference and support the finding of areas of common interest and understanding.

3.3.3. Expected Results of the Activity

1. The activity is expected to lead to increased awareness of the BTWC and the Tenth Review Conference in 2027 and its significance for the future evolution of the BTWC.
2. The regional workshops will facilitate a comprehensive and cross-regional dialogue on issues to be considered at the Tenth Review Conference.

4. STAFFING ISSUES

The implementation of this Council Decision will require staffing presence in Geneva to ensure the coordinated and streamlined implementation of all activities under this Council Decision. It is therefore suggested to have a P3 Political Affairs Officer and a GS4 Administrative Assistant based in the UNODA Geneva Branch.

The Council Decision will be implemented in close coordination with Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/349 and the BTWC ISU and under the overall guidance and responsibility of the Chief of the BTWC ISU.

5. REPORTING

The UNODA/BTWC-ISU will submit to the HR yearly progress reports on the implementation of the activities.

6. DURATION

The total estimated duration of the project's implementation is 36 months.

7. EU VISIBILITY

UNODA/BTWC ISU will take all appropriate measures to publicise the fact that the activities conducted have been funded by the EU. Such measures will be carried out in accordance with the Commission Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions laid down and published by the European Commission. UNODA/BTWC ISU will thus ensure the visibility of the EU contribution with appropriate branding and publicity, highlighting the role of the EU, ensuring the transparency of its actions, and raising awareness of the reasons for this Decision as well as awareness of EU support for this Decision and the results of that support. Material produced by the projects will display the EU flag in accordance with EU guidelines for the accurate use and reproduction of the flag.

8. BENEFICIARIES

The beneficiaries of Activity 1 on supporting the BTWC inter-sessional programme by facilitating consultations and integrating scientific perspectives on topics under discussion are officials, scientists, academics and industry representatives from BTWC States Parties and observers.

The beneficiaries of Activity 2 in relation to capacity building for BTWC National Contact Points are States Parties to the BTWC, particularly officials designated as national contact points.

The beneficiaries of Activity 3 on supporting the preparations for the Tenth Review Conference will be representatives of BTWC States Parties.
