



2024/349

17.1.2024

COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2024/349
of 16 January 2024
in support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on European Union, and in particular Article 28(1) and Article 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 is 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 Council has adopted Joint Actions 2006/184/CFSP ⁽¹⁾ and 2008/858/CFSP ⁽²⁾ and Decisions 2012/421/CFSP ⁽³⁾, (CFSP) 2016/51 ⁽⁴⁾, (CFSP) 2019/97 ⁽⁵⁾, (CFSP) 2021/2033 ⁽⁶⁾ and (CFSP) 2023/123 ⁽⁷⁾ in support of the BTWC in the framework of the EU Strategy. That Union support should be continued.
- (4) 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.
- (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).

⁽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).

⁽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).

⁽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).

⁽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).

⁽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).

⁽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).

⁽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).

2. The objectives of the action referred to in paragraph 1 shall be to:
 - (a) promote universal adherence to the BTWC by encouraging States not party to the BTWC to better understand the benefits of joining the BTWC and getting more involved in BTWC meetings and other activities;
 - (b) develop national capacities for BTWC implementation in developing countries in order to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention, while also establishing active cooperation networks with national counterparts, experts and national institutions able to provide high-quality and relevant assistance;
 - (c) provide capacity-development opportunities for young policymakers, scientists and academics from the Global South engaged in fields related to the BTWC, encouraging the development of young professionals' networks and capitalising on training materials developed by the Union;
 - (d) support the intersessional programme from 2024 to 2026; and
 - (e) enable tools for awareness raising, education and engagement.
3. A detailed description of the action is set out in the Annex.

Article 2

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

Article 3

1. The financial reference amount for the implementation of the action financed by the Union referred to in Article 1 shall be EUR 2 760 292,43.
2. The expenditure financed by the amount set out in paragraph 1 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 financed by the amount set out in paragraph 1. For that purpose, it shall conclude a contribution agreement with UNODA. The contribution 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 referred to in paragraph 3 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 HR 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 referred to in Article 1.

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 referred to in Article 3(3). However, it shall expire six months after the date of its entry into force if no agreement has been concluded within that period.

Done at Brussels, 16 January 2024.

For the Council
The President
V. VAN PETEGHEM

ANNEX

Project in support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) for the period 2024–2027**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 currently has 185 States Parties and four Signatory States. There are eight States which have neither signed nor acceded to the Convention. In order to establish and uphold a strong global norm against the use of biological weapons to harm or kill humans, animals or plants, it is important to have as many States join the Convention as possible. Requests for legal and technical support in the process of joining the Convention are often made by States to the BTWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU).

While the BTWC has reached almost universal adherence, the levels of implementation of the Convention at the national level vary greatly. Requests for specific technical and legal assistance are regularly made by BTWC States Parties, often developing countries, to the ISU.

The requests for assistance both for universalisation support and capacity building activities made to the BTWC ISU surpass its capacities and available funds to provide assistance.

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 further strengthen the Convention by supporting its universalisation and implementation at the national level. The project will build on the successful implementation of Joint Actions 2006/184/CFSP and 2008/858/CFSP and Decisions 2012/421/CFSP, (CFSP) 2016/51, (CFSP) 2019/97 and (CFSP) 2021/2072.

The project will provide essential follow-up and momentum to the activities undertaken throughout 2019–2024 in the framework of Decision (CFSP) 2019/97 in support of the BTWC. It will also ensure the sustainability of those activities, enhance the implementation of the outcomes of the Ninth Review Conference held in Geneva from 28 November to 16 December 2022 and will support the intersessional programme for 2023–2026, as agreed by the Ninth Review Conference. The project will also make critical contributions to make BTWC discussions more inclusive and diverse, among others, through the increased integration of youth perspectives.

In 2024, the project will be implemented in parallel with the ongoing Decision (CFSP) 2021/2072 (December 2021–December 2024), without duplicating any activities but making best use of possible synergies between the two Decisions.

The project will be guided by the following principles:

- (a) While making best use of the experience gained through Joint Actions 2006/184/CFSP and 2008/858/CFSP and Decisions 2012/421/CFSP, (CFSP) 2016/51, (CFSP) 2019/97 and (CFSP) 2021/2072;
- (b) Providing assistance to States Parties as well as States not party to the BTWC based on their specific needs and upon their request with respect to strengthened implementation and universalisation of the BTWC;
- (c) 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;
- (d) Focusing on the outcomes of the Ninth Review Conference held in Geneva from 28 November to 16 December 2022 and supporting the new intersessional programme;
- (e) Supporting the Chairs of the BTWC meetings and making best use of the mandate of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU);
- (f) Contributing to the advancement of the peace and security- and health-related objectives through the effective implementation of BTWC by States Parties and its universalisation.

2. OVERALL OBJECTIVE

This project is aimed at enhancing national and international security against the threat posed by biological weapons by increasing the global membership of the BTWC, strengthening the capacity of its States Parties to effectively implement the Convention and raising awareness about the importance of the Convention amongst NGOs, civil society and the science and technology communities.

3. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The expected outcomes of this project are as follows:

- (a) promoting universal adherence to the BTWC by encouraging States not party to better understand the benefits of joining the BTWC and getting more involved in BTWC meetings and other activities;
- (b) developing national capacities for BTWC implementation in developing countries to ensure their effective implementation of the Convention, while also establishing active cooperation networks with national counterparts, experts and national institutions able to provide high-quality and relevant assistance;
- (c) providing capacity-development opportunities for young policymakers, scientists and academics from the Global South engaged in fields related to the BTWC, encouraging the development of young professionals' networks and capitalising on training materials developed by the European Union;
- (d) supporting the intersessional programme from 2024 to 2026;
- (e) enabling tools for awareness-raising, education and engagement.

4. 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:

Activity 1 – Support for BTWC universalisation

4.1.1. Purpose of the Activity

The BTWC currently has 185 States Parties and four Signatory States (Egypt, Haiti, Somalia, Syrian Arab Republic). There are eight States which have neither signed nor acceded to the Convention (Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Israel, Kiribati, Micronesia (Federated States of) and Tuvalu). Universalisation of the BTWC aims at expanding the membership of the Convention to ensure that there are as many States Parties as possible. Achieving the full universality of the Convention has long been seen as a priority by BTWC States Parties. In order to establish and uphold a strong global norm against the use of biological weapons to harm or kill humans, animals or plants, it is important to have as many States join the Convention as possible. Strategic and personalised universalisation efforts have proven to be decisive in recent and impending accessions to the Convention.

This activity will follow up on the activities and achievements under Project 1 of Decision (CFSP) 2019/97 to promote the universalisation of the BTWC. The main aim will be to intensify the efforts currently underway and initiated during the previous Council Decisions.

4.1.2. Description of the Activity

This activity will aim at enhancing the impact of activities carried out under previous EU Council Decisions and ensuring the necessary follow-up to encourage countries to ratify or accede to the BTWC. This intensified follow-up will be offered to a maximum of two States, whether signatories or non-signatory States of the BTWC, that demonstrate substantial progress in their ratification or accession processes. Tailored visits to Geneva and subsequent follow-up visits will address specific assistance requests, including raising awareness about the Convention at the national level and offering initial legal and technical support for the implementation of the Convention. External stakeholders will also be involved in the visits.

4.1.3. Expected results of the Activity

1. National authorities and stakeholders in States not party to the BTWC, including parliamentarians, governmental officials and civil society obtain an enhanced understanding of the benefits of joining the BTWC;
2. An increased number of States not party to the BTWC express their commitment to joining the BTWC, start engaging in activities and meetings and take steps towards accession/ratification.

Activity 2 – Capacity Development in support of BTWC national implementation

4.2.1. Purpose of the Activity

Article IV of the BTWC requires States Parties to take all necessary measures implement the Convention at the national level. However, levels of national implementation vary among States Parties. This activity aims at providing specific technical and legal assistance to States Parties requesting such capacity building.

4.2.2. Description of the Activity

This project will focus on advancing the initiatives launched under Decision (CFSP) 2019/97 within the framework of its Extended Assistance Programmes and National Preparedness Programmes. Deliberations and possible recommendations of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the BTWC, established at the Ninth Review Conference, on national implementation will be closely monitored and integrated into the project implementation accordingly.

The following types of capacity-building activities will be provided to States Parties requesting such assistance from the BTWC ISU in a modular approach, i.e. based on the indicated assistance needs of the respective States:

- National awareness raising on / introduction to the BTWC;
- Legislative assistance;
- Training on the preparation and submission of national Confidence-Building Measures (CBM) reports;
- Awareness raising about the BTWC for young scientists and university students;
- Elaboration of national inventories of dangerous pathogens;
- Support in the elaboration of Article X assistance requests for all other requests of assistance.

The above capacity-building activities will be provided to States Parties requesting such assistance on a continuous basis throughout the duration of the project and within the given budget limits. The assistance activities will preferably be carried out in person, with online formats being used when considered more conducive (e.g. for the youth events). UNODA's three Regional Centres will be involved in the organisation of the capacity-building events as applicable.

In the case that the assistance requests from States are assessed by the BTWC ISU/UNODA as going beyond the above capacity-building activities, States will be assisted in the elaboration of Article X assistance requests and the matchmaking with other external assistance providers will be facilitated in cooperation with the BTWC ISU.

Under this activity, UNODA will partner with EU Member States, experts and national institutions that are able to provide high-quality and relevant assistance. With regard to the elaboration of national inventories of dangerous pathogens, UNODA will continue to partner with the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) to assist at least one State Party per year in this endeavour. Funds will also be used to upgrade and translate the current software used to manage the national inventories of dangerous pathogens in order to make it available to more States Parties. UNODA will also continue to partner with UNICRI, the EU CBRN Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence as well as non-governmental organisations and think tanks, as applicable. The project will also encourage States Parties to foster the creation of networks in their regions or sub-regions whenever possible. Therefore, depending on the interested States' specific requests for assistance, regional formats for capacity-building activities could also be envisaged.

Also under this activity, one peer review exercise will be undertaken in order to further broaden support for this concept. The exercise will build upon the exercises conducted in France in 2013, by the Benelux countries in 2015, Morocco in 2017 and the Kyrgyz Republic in 2022.

4.2.3. Expected results of the Activity

1. BTWC States Parties strengthen their national capacity to implement the BTWC through the provision of dedicated assistance on identified areas of need, reinforce coordination and networking with the stakeholders involved in the BTWC process and enhance their BTWC submissions, such as CBMs;
2. BTWC States Parties enhance their cooperation and assistance opportunities, their confidence levels, and their BTWC networks through exchanges and discussions held in the framework of peer review exercises;
3. The capacity of selected BTWC States Parties to prevent and respond to a biological weapons attack is enhanced.

Activity 3 – Youth for Biosecurity Initiative

4.3.1. Purpose of the Activity

This activity will build on the activities and achievements under Project 3 of Decision (CFSP) 2019/97. Through the Youth for Biosecurity initiative, a new and innovative space for the perspectives of a new generation of biosecurity professionals has been created and youth expertise has been leveraged. A network of over 100 talented scientists from the Global South was forged, creating a community of young experts engaging actively in BTWC discussions. The Activity aims at continuing to provide capacity development opportunities for young policy-makers, scientists and academics from the Global South engaged in fields related to the BTWC.

4.3.2. Description of the Activity

To this end, in total three yearly fellowship programmes with 20 participants each, consisting of a preparatory online segment as well as an in-person one-week visit to Geneva, will be organised. The fellowship aims to bring together youth from the Global South to provide them exposure to multilateral negotiations in the framework of the BTWC and to enable their engagement with diplomats and experts. Particular emphasis will be placed on encouraging the participation of young women from the Global South, therefore, one of the three fellowship programmes will be open only to female scientists.

The activity will build upon successful initiatives such as UNODA's Youth for Disarmament, expand upon them and ensure continuity of the efforts already undertaken.

4.3.3. Expected results of the Activity:

1. Increased participation of youth from the Global South, including young women, in the BTWC process, particularly in meetings and events related to biosecurity and establishment of a solid network of young Global South scientists.

Activity 4 - Support for the BTWC inter-sessional programme

4.4.1. Purpose of the Activity

The BTWC Sponsorship Programme supports developing States to send their representatives to official BTWC meetings in Geneva. These meetings include the Review Conference, which takes place every five years, as well as Meetings that occur in the intersessional period between Review Conferences. The Sponsorship Programme was established by the Seventh Review Conference (2011) and subsequently renewed by the Eighth Review Conference (2016) and most recently by the Ninth Review Conference (2022). The Sponsorship Programme is funded by voluntary contributions from States Parties.

4.4.2. Description of Activity

This activity will support the sponsorship programme that enables experts from developing countries to participate in the BTWC inter-sessional meetings in Geneva. The sponsorship programme will also be used to bring officials from States not yet party to the Convention to BTWC meetings in Geneva in order for them to get acquainted with official BTWC meetings.

4.4.3. Expected results of the Activity

1. A common understanding at the regional/sub-regional levels of the objectives of the BTWC intersessional programme from 2024 to 2026 is reached and the level of preparations of States Parties to participate in the Tenth Review Conference in 2027 is enhanced;
2. Experts from developing BTWC States Parties gain an enhanced understanding of the BTWC intersessional programme and its Review Conferences through their sponsored participation in these sessions.

Activity 5 - Enabling tools for outreach, education and engagement

4.5.1. Purpose of the Activity

The aim of the activity will be to produce concrete and practical educational and awareness-raising tools, materials and approaches to enable and support the activities described in the activities above and to enhance the overall visibility of the BTWC. All activities will be realised in accordance with and build upon UNODA's Disarmament Education Strategy.

4.5.2. Description of the Activity

Concretely it is proposed to produce a course curriculum in the six official UN languages for students in the life sciences to raise awareness about the creation, evolution and continuing significance of the BTWC in the maintenance of peace and security. Subjects of particular interest to students, such as dual-use research of concern and developments in science and technology of relevance to the Convention will be given particular attention.

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the entry into force of the BTWC in 2025, it is proposed to organise a half-day celebratory event at UN Geneva. It is also proposed to fund the production of a publication to mark the 50th anniversary, which would be launched at the celebratory event.

In order to reach a broader audience and facilitate efforts such as the universalisation and strengthened implementation of the Convention, it is also proposed to translate the BTWC website into all official UN languages, as it is currently only available in English.

4.5.3. Expected results of the Activity

1. An effective implementation of the abovementioned activities is achieved and their impact is magnified by the support of the enabling tools.

5. STAFFING

The implementation of this project will require a continued staffing presence in Geneva to ensure the streamlined implementation of the activities underway since the previous Council Decision. Currently, the staff based in Geneva dedicated to the implementation of this Decision includes staff members at the P3 and G6 levels, with funds for a P2 level staff member provided by an EU Member State until October 2023.

In light of the scope of the proposed activities as outlined above and to ensure high-quality implementation and sustainability of efforts and possible interlinkages with the Working Group's proceedings, it is proposed to add a P2 position and to maintain the previously funded P3 and G6 positions. The P2 will specifically be in charge of implementing Activity 3 - Youth for Biosecurity Initiative as well as support the implementation of Activities 1, 2 and 5.

6. **REPORTING**

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

7. **DURATION**

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

8. **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.

9. **BENEFICIARIES**

The beneficiaries of Project 1 will be States not party to the BTWC (both signatory States and non-signatory States) for universalisation activities, including the private sector, academia and NGOs, as appropriate.

The beneficiaries of Project 2 in relation to capacity development activities are States Parties to the BTWC, with particular attention being paid to States that have recently joined the Convention.

The beneficiaries of Project 3 will be young policy-makers, scientists, and academicians from the BTWC States Parties in the Global South engaged in scientific and academic fields related to the BTWC.

The beneficiaries of Project 4 will be officials from States Parties, particularly those working on BTWC issues, such as those designated as National Contact Points and other national experts identified by the States Parties themselves.

The beneficiaries of Project 5 will be those who produce the relevant materials as well as those who make use of them, e.g. students and teachers, industry officials and NGOs.