Operationalization of Article VII of the Biological Weapons Convention

20 August 2026, Palais des Nations, Geneva

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Overarching Project Objectives and Main Deliverables

- Promote strengthened preparedness and response capabilities under BWC Article VII
- Further broaden support among States Parties for operationalizing the provisions of BWC Article VII, taking into account the draft recommendations on assistance, response and preparedness emerging from the Working Group

  ✓ International workshop on the operationalization of Article VII: 19-20 May 2026

  ✓ Table-top exercise to address certain aspects pertaining to a response to a request for Article VII: 21-22 July 2026

  ✓ Side event in the margins of the ninth session of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the BWC: 20 August 2026

  ✓ A UNODA/GCSP publication on the operationalization of Article VII

This project was made possible by a voluntary contribution from the United States of America to UNODA

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Article VII Workshop 18-19 May 2026, GCSP
Organization and Objectives

- 55 participants from Permanent Missions, National Contact Points, Capitals, International organizations, Academia
- Raise further awareness about the provisions of Article VII, including ongoing efforts in the framework of the Working Group
- Identify transferable lessons from natural disease outbreak response operations for the BWC
- Address practical considerations towards the operationalization of Article VII
- Identify lessons in relation to the operationalization of capabilities through national, regional and international simulation and tabletop exercises





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Workshop Outcomes

- Demonstrated broad support for strengthening the operational readiness of Art. VII
- Confirmed that Article VII remains politically sensitive and procedurally underdeveloped (some unresolved interpretive questions)
- Found that Article VII cannot function in isolation. Its operationalization depends on national implementation (Article IV), transparency (Article V), and capacity-building (Article X)
- Identified transferable lessons for Article VII from natural disease outbreaks
  - Value of specialized national laboratories, high-containment facilities, rapidly deployable outbreak investigation teams, including mobile laboratories
  - Whole-Genome Sequencing as a tool for genomic surveillance, faster attribution, and evidence-based public health decision-making
  - Importance of pre-existing coordination agreements, standard operating procedures, and regional platforms to enable rapid scale-up
  - Integrated preparedness — bridging public health, veterinary, defence, and emergency services — as a prerequisite for rapid and effective response





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Workshop Outcomes

- Re-confirmed broad support for the draft Voluntary Guidelines for Assistance
- Looked into practical aspects in relation to assigning a role for NCPs as focal points for communication related to ARP:
  - NCP structures vary greatly across States Parties: additional training, capacity-building, and clear mandates are needed
  - Financial and coordination implications — particularly for engaging veterinary and public health services
- Re-confirmed broad support for the Article VII Database containing a registry of deployable capabilities, integrated into a broader unified BWC portal
- Highlighted the benefits of simulation and tabletop exercises as essential tools for identifying operational gaps, refining response plans, and making procedures realistic and actionable





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Article VII Tabletop Exercise, 21-22 July 2026, GCSP Organization and Objectives

- 49 participants, from Permanent Missions, NCPs, select international organizations and academia
- Covered different steps and stages from the initiation of a request for assistance to the delivery and receipt of different types of assistance offers (UNSC deliberations not covered)
- Aimed to address certain aspects of raising and responding to a request for assistance in the context of Article VII:
  - ✓ make practical use of the Draft Voluntary Guidelines
  - ✓ highlight some crucial considerations for States Parties in the context of an Article VII request
  - ✓ provide an opportunity for informal reflections on practical aspects in relation to the operationalization of Article VII
  - ✓ provide the ISU with observations on practical steps and actions to be taken in the event of the activation of Article VII





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TTX outcomes

- Helped clarify the roles of the requesting State, the ISU, States Parties, and relevant international organizations
- Confirmed that triggering Article VII would be politically highly sensitive. At the same time, it would help to ensure that critical assistance is provided
- Uncertainty about processes and procedures: some SPs might engage in preparatory informal exchanges with the ISU, UN/New York and other SPs
- International organizations with relevant mandates might be engaged in an assistance scenario at an early stage as a first contact for reporting and assistance
- Participants appreciated the availability of the draft voluntary guidelines as useful guidance concerning the formulation of a request for assistance





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TTX outcomes

- Critical importance of a fully functional and active NCP taking part in the national coordination mechanism established in an assistance scenario
- Importance of national preparedness, including readily available arrangements to mobilize assistance bilaterally or through the BWC
- Bilateral and regional assistance may expedite aid delivery, but channelling assistance through the BWC would carry a different significance
- Participants appreciated the TTX as a learning opportunity with experts from different regions, and with diverse backgrounds and expertise





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UNODA-GCSP Publication

- Overview of the interpretative issues relating to Article VII, the related practical challenges, the efforts by States Parties to address these shortcomings and to reflect the outcome of previous activities

- Considerations on the practical implications of the Working Group's recommendations in the area of assistance, response and preparedness

- Insights generated from the workshop in May 2026 and the TTX in July 2026



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