United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs

GCSP Geneva Centre for Security Policy

Side event / Ninth Session of the BWC Working Group

Thursday 20 August 2026 13:20 - 14:30 hrs. CEST

United Nations Office at Geneva, Palais des Nations, Room VIII

The Operationalization of Article VII of the Biological Weapons Convention

Background:

The United States of America recently provided a voluntary contribution to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) to promote strengthened preparedness and response capabilities under Article VII of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). In particular, the contribution aimed to further broaden support among BWC States Parties towards operationalizing the provisions of Article VII of the Convention, taking into account the draft recommendations adopted *ad referendum* on assistance, response and preparedness under the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Convention.

Main Objectives:

The side event will inform about key project outputs delivered by the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) in close collaboration with the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP):

- Findings from the International Workshop on the operationalization of Article VII/BWC (18-19 May 2026, Geneva);
- Insights into the Tabletop Exercise on Article VII/ BWC (21-22 July 2026, Geneva);
- Launch of a publication on the operationalization of Article VII.

Speakers:

- Ms. Briana Olsen, Senior Advisor, U.S. Delegation to the Conference on Disarmament, U.S. Department of State
- Dr. Valeria Santori, Consultant, UNODA
- Dr. Jean Pascal Zanders, Head of the CBW Programme, Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs
- Mr. Peter Babigumira Ahabwe, Epidemic Intelligence Analyst at the Uganda Public Health Emergency Operations Centre
- LtCol Júlio Manuel Coutinho Franco Gouveia Carvalho, Commander of the Biological and Chemical Defence Laboratory, Portugal
- Mr. Simon Cleobury, Head of Arms Control and Disarmament GCSP

Moderation of the side event: Mr. Alex Lampalzer, Deputy Chief BWC Implementation Support Unit

PROGRAMME

Time	Topic	Speaker
5 min	Welcome and Opening Remarks	Ms. Briana Olsen, Senior Advisor, U.S. Delegation to the Conference on Disarmament, U.S. Department of State
10	Highlights from the project activities including presentation of the key deliverables	Dr. Valeria Santori, Consultant BWC ISU
10	The Challenge of operationalizing Article VII	Dr. Jean Pascal Zanders, Head of the CBW Programme, Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs
10	The importance of operationalizing Article VII: experiences from States engaged in the delivery/receipt of assistance operations for natural disease outbreaks: Transferable lessons for the BWC	Peter Babigumira Ahabwe, Epidemic Intelligence Analyst at Uganda Public Health Emergency Operations Centre
10	Sharing lessons from relevant exercises to facilitate preparedness organized by BWC States Parties	LtCol Júlio Manuel Coutinho Franco Gouveia Carvalho, Commander of the Biological and Chemical Defence Laboratory, Portugal
20	Q&A session	
5 min	Closing Remarks	Mr. Simon Cleobury, Head of Arms Control and Disarmament GCSP

Light refreshments will be provided at 13:00