

50 Years of the Biological Weapons Convention: *What Comes Next?*

March 26th, 2025 | 9:00am – 12:30pm (ET)

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2025

Purpose

The purpose of this event is to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Biological Weapons Convention and the 100th anniversary of the Geneva Protocol. We aim to learn from and build on the past and focus on the future. The event will include:

- Discussion of accomplishments, lessons learned, and looking ahead from the first 50 years that inform the next 50 years
- Effects of science and technology on the future of the BWC and its relevance for eliminating biological weapons of the past and future
- Opportunities for innovation in nonproliferation by expanding active participation of relevant sectors and disciplines, more countries, and new experts.

During the discussions, speakers and attendees will be prompted to consider the following questions with an eye toward the next 5-10 years of the BWC:

- How is the science and technology changing the risk and threat landscape?
- How does that impact how we look at Article I and Article VII?
- What are the opportunities for cooperation and peaceful/prophylactic uses in relation to Article VII and Article X?
- How do we drive nonproliferation innovation through participation of broader array of experts and understanding of science and technology?

Agenda

ET

9:00–9:05 am **Welcome**

Kavita Berger, National Academies

9:05-10:05 **50 Years and the Road Ahead**

Moderator: Richard Stone, Howard Hughes Medical Institute

Remarks:

Ambassador Bonnie Jenkins

Sonia Ben Ouagrham-Gormley, George Mason University

Discussion Topics:

- Reflections on the first 50 years of the BWC, accomplishments and lessons learned
- A look ahead at the next 10 years, considering challenges and opportunities resulting from advances in science and technology
- Opportunities for strengthening the BWC through involvement of new experts, more countries, and private sector along with civil society and academia, and government experts and diplomats.

10:05-10:15 **Break**

10:15-11:15 **Expert Community Conclave**

Moderator: Jenifer Mackby, Geneva Centre for Security Policy

Panelists:

Nancy Connell, National Academies
Dave Stiefel, Nuclear Threat Initiative
Gigi Gronvall, Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security
John Moulton, Council on Strategic Risks
Daniel Correa, Federation of American Scientists

This session brings together experts from the NGO community to reflect on key lessons learned over the past 50 years of the BWC and to explore future challenges and opportunities. The discussion will focus on how advancements in science and technology are reshaping the risk and threat landscape, and the implications of these changes on the implementation of the BWC, from the perspectives of the participants.

11:15-12:15 **Town Hall**

Moderator: Katie Bowman, National Academies

Panelists:

Mike Imperiale, University of Michigan, USA (virtual)
Rocco Casagrande, Deloitte, USA
Julie Fischer, Georgetown University, USA (virtual)
Maria Espona, National Defense School, Argentina (virtual)

Discussion Topics:

- What are the new challenges posed by the current and emerging technologies (e.g., AI, synthetic/engineering biology, automation), and how can we address them using existing frameworks? Are new frameworks necessary?
- How do these technological changes impact the overall proliferation landscape, and what new risks do they introduce?
- What opportunities do these changes present for enhanced risk mitigation, event detection, and other proactive measures?
- How can we effectively respond to the evolving risks and challenges posed by these technological advancements?
- What strategies can we implement to sustain capacity and advance biosafety education moving forward?