

Thursday 20th August 2026

A clustering of issues

Most of Wednesday saw consultations in small groups behind closed doors. There were areas within which these were making some progress, but which in other areas that have a more complicated set of issues to deal it is probably too early to tell.

Hard copies of the latest version of the draft decision were printed first thing in the morning for the use of people in the plenary room. The latest was Rev.3 which had been circulated electronically to delegates the night before to reflect the changes agreed during the day. The recent drafts have now been posted by the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) to the official web page of the Ninth Session which can be found at <https://meetings.unoda.org/meeting/79378/>.

The creation of issue clusters

The Chair of the WG, Ambassador Frederico S Duque Estrada Meyer (Brazil), announced at the start of the morning plenary that discussions would be starting in parallel informal groups (and so held behind closed doors) based around seven issue clusters. These clusters were generally welcomed, although some smaller delegations privately indicated that they did not have the capacity to follow everything going on – there are a number of delegations with just one person available most of the time. Five were active during Wednesday, with facilitators indicated in square brackets:

Cluster 1 – Unilateral coercive measures (UCMs) [India/Norway]

Cluster 2 – Confidence-building measures (CBMs) [Peru]

Cluster 3 – Compliance and verification [Netherlands]

Cluster 4 – ICA Trust Fund [Canada/South Africa]

Cluster 5 – Science and Technology (S&T) [Pakistan]

There were brief reports back to plenary at the start of the afternoon meeting and towards the end of the day. Clusters 2 and 3 did not report any specific outcome at this stage.

Cluster 1 reported that while some progress had been made it was too early to propose new language but that this might be available by the end of the day as consultations would continue after the plenary adjourned. The facilitator suggested there was ‘a very slim and a very narrow landing zone’ but it might be possible to reach it.

Cluster 4 produced some new text in relation to the paragraph on receiving contributions, but that this had not reached consensus. The proposal was to split the paragraph into two. On the paragraph relating to the ICA Steering Group, there were indications of some appetite to recast this paragraph from scratch to find a new formulation.

Cluster 5 had made progress on the paragraph on the S&T reporting schedule. One step was by adding a phrase so it reads ‘through the Review Group consistent with its terms of reference’ The terms of reference were amended so that Review Group would report annually to states parties and that the Review Conference would get a five-year compilation for its consideration. This meant these three paragraphs worked upon could be converted to green.

These reports have been produced by the BioWeapons Prevention Project (BWPP) for all BWC meetings with NGO registration since the Sixth Review Conference (2006). They are available from <https://www.cbw-events.org.uk/bwc-rep.html> where a subscription link is available. The reports are written by Richard Guthrie, CBW Events, who is solely responsible for their contents <richard@cbw-events.org.uk>.