

PRESS RELEASE from the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre ([VERTIC](#))

VERTIC report gives states new modular tools to strengthen Biological Weapons Convention

Pressing issue for Sixth BWC Review Conference in Geneva, Switzerland, 20 Nov–8 Dec 2006

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In five days time, over 170 states parties and signatories to the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) will meet in Geneva to review progress in the implementation of the treaty. This will be the first time they have so gathered since 2002.

With heightened public and government awareness of the dangers of terrorist groups, criminal organizations or states developing, acquiring or using biological weapons, the Review Conference provides the international community with an important opportunity to combat such threats and to ensure that the absolute prohibition on the production and use of these weapons is maintained. VERTIC believes that there is significant scope for strengthening the convention through adoption of one or more of the modular mechanisms outlined in 'Verification Matters no. 6: [A new strategy: strengthening the biological weapons regime through modular mechanisms](#)'.

1. the establishment of a national authority and contact points in each state party for implementation of the treaty;
2. the continuation of the BWC staff arrangement under the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs (UNDDA) and modest expansion in its functions and responsibilities;
3. the establishment of convention implementation advisers to co-ordinate advice and assistance to states parties;
4. the creation of a scientific and technical advisers' network (STAN) to consider, review and communicate to states parties practical ways of addressing issues arising from scientific and technological developments that effect the convention and its implementation;
5. the creation of a legal advisers' network (LAN) to help all states parties to improve their national laws to implement the convention;
6. the creation of a confidence-building measures (CBMs) unit to increase the number of returns from states parties and to improve the quality of submissions; and
7. the establishment of a group of experts to consider the issues related to investigations and inspections under the BWC.

Each of these mechanisms can stand alone and make an effective contribution to the efforts of states parties to achieve biological disarmament. Together, they offer synergistic benefits and interconnections that would be of even greater benefit.

The report has been edited by Angela Woodward, VERTIC's Deputy Director and a leading international expert on verification and implementation aspects of the convention. To read the report, click [here](#). Please note that Angela will be in Geneva for the Review Conference. To arrange an interview or background briefing while she is there, please contact:

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Background for Editors

About VERTIC: Established in 1986, VERTIC is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation. Its mission is to promote effective and efficient verification as a means of ensuring confidence in the implementation of international agreements and intra-national agreements with international involvement. While VERTIC maintains a broad interest in all matters relating to multilateral monitoring, verification and compliance issues, our three research programmes are: arms control and disarmament, the environment and peace agreements.

VERTIC's [arms control and disarmament programme](#) deals with the monitoring and verification of international treaties on nuclear nonproliferation, nuclear disarmament, nuclear testing, chemical and biological weapons and conventional weaponry, including the performance of the relevant international verification organizations.

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