

*Working together to strengthen the norms
against chemical and biological weapons.*



CBW Challenges Radar no. 4

Conference on Chemical and Biological Weapons and the Interconnectivity of Norms

On 23-24 October, the Justus Liebig University Giessen, as part of the CBWNet project, will host a conference on the interconnectivity of norms. The conference will examine selected issues pertaining to the normative regimes against biological and chemical weapons. Papers related to this topic are welcome and should be submitted by July 30, 2023.

[Call for Papers!](#)

Working Paper (in German): Implementation of international norms in the German context

International norms and regulations against chemical and biological weapons require implementation into the national legal framework. The latest CBWNet working paper by Kristoffer Burck and Barry de Vries provides an insight into where Germany stands in this regard. While the transformation of some of these norms is obligatory, states have a certain amount of discretion in how they design their national laws. They can choose where to place emphasis and whether to add specific details.

The paper presents the international framework to which Germany is bound, analyzes its current implementation in domestic law and highlights its specificities, and also presents non-legal codes of conduct applicable to actors in

Germany. Finally, the paper discusses ways and means to improve the existing framework.

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Working Paper: Artificial intelligence: possible risks and benefits for BWC and CWC

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a rapidly evolving technology that is having a profound impact on various fields, including medicine, pharmacology, and life sciences research. Its development is driven by factors such as the availability of large amounts of data and the decreasing cost of computing. However, like many complex technologies, it also carries the risk of potential misuse for military or criminal purposes. Concerns have been raised that some AI applications in the life sciences could be misused for the development of biological and chemical weapons, which are prohibited under the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

In this working paper, Anna Krin and Gunnar Jeremias provide an overview of some selected AI applications in the life sciences and discuss potential misuse scenarios associated with these applications, focusing also on the current known limitations in the field of AI. They also present some promising AI applications that could support the implementation of the BWC and CWC. In addition, they address the challenging issue of legally binding AI regulations in the context of biosecurity and provide some food for thought on the limitations of existing frameworks.

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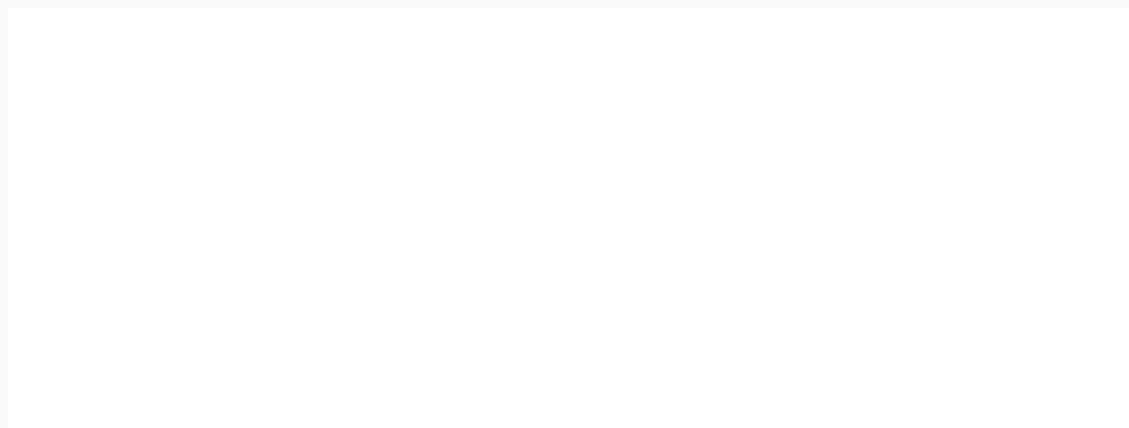
What's new at CBWNet

On 12-13 June, [the CBWNet team met with the CBWNet Transfer Network](#) at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt to discuss recent project developments . Among other topics, the group engaged in an in-depth discussion on the recently

concluded Fifth CWC Review Conference and former OPCW Director-General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, gave his assessment of the political dimension.

We are pleased that CBWNet doctoral researcher Almutaser Albalawi (PRIF) has been [selected for the 2023 Youth for Biosecurity Fellowship](#).

Together with CBWNet researchers [Kristoffer Burck \(JLU\)](#) and [Anna Krin \(ZNF\)](#), [Almutaser Albalawi attended the Chemical Weapons Convention's Fifth Review Conference](#) in The Hague, Netherlands, from 15 – 19 May as an NGO representative. The CBWNet Coordinator also attended the Review Conference, where he supported the German delegation.



On 8 May, we met with our implementation partners from the German Federal Foreign Office at the IFSH Berlin Office.

On 8-9 May, Network Coordinator Alexander Kelle convened an expert workshop in Berlin, which focused on the security policy framework of the prohibition regimes for chemical and biological weapons (CBW) over the past three decades. Together with two forthcoming working papers, this forms a central part of CBWNet Work Package 5.

On 23 February, [CBWNet and the German Embassy organized an event on chemical weapons disinformation](#) in The Hague.

News

- UNIDIR, UNODA and the WHO held a conference on “[Biorisks, Biosecurity and Biological Disarmament](#)” on July 4-5, where CBWNet researcher Una Jakob (PRIF) chaired a panel on “Monitoring and verification of the BWC”
- The UK released its updated [Biological Security Strategy](#), June 2023
- The OPCW officially [inaugurated its new Centre for Chemistry and Technology](#) near The Hague, May 2023
- The WHO [launched a global network to detect and prevent infectious disease threats](#), May 2023
- The U.S. Department of State [released its Annual Report on Compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention](#), April 2023
- UNODA, in cooperation with INTERPOL’s Bioterrorism Prevention Unit and the Public Health Agency of Canada’s National Microbiology Laboratory, [organized a training course on biological crime scene management for the UNSGM](#) in New York, March 2023

Publications of interest

Publications by CBWNet Team Members

- Project Coordinator Alexander Kelle analyzes the shifting focus in the CWC from the verification of destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles to the attribution of chemical weapons use in a *Nonproliferation Review* [article](#), 14 April, 2023

- Almutaser Albalawi describes why a WMD-free zone in the Middle East is more necessary than ever in an [article](#) for the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 10 April, 2023
- Kristoffer Burck highlights patterns of disinformation about chemical and biological weapons and the role of Russian officials in it in a [PRIF blog post](#), 6 March, 2023

CWC and BWC RevCons

- [Daily Reports](#) from the Fifth Chemical Weapons Review Conference in The Hague by Richard Guthrie, May 2023
- Vivienne Zhang, Sarah Erickson and Manon Blancafort discuss the results of the Ninth Biological Weapons Review Conference in Geneva in a [UNIDIR commentary](#), 13 March 2023

Miscellaneous

- Bruin-Hoegée et al. highlight the possibility of analyzing chemical warfare agent biomarkers in plants in a [journal article](#) in *Analytical Methods*, 16 December, 2022
- Matt Field discusses the question "Can a 1975 bioweapons ban handle today's biothreats?" in his [article](#) for the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 6 March 2023
- Sam Weiss Evans and David Gillum suggest that "The lab leak conversation shows it's time to rethink our biosecurity infrastructure, not just policies" in an [article](#) for *STAT News*, 21 March, 2023
- Thomas Gaulkin discusses the risks of using AI systems to build weapons of mass destruction in an [article](#) for the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 30 March 2023
- Filippa Lentzos and Tancredi Francese wrote an [article \(with a second part\)](#) in the *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, examining the geopolitical tensions between Moscow and Washington in the context of the BWC, 17 May, 2023
- Stefano Costanzi, Gregory D. Koblenz and Richard Cupitt discuss expanding the Australia Group's Chemical Weapons Precursors Control List with a family-based approach in an [article](#) for the *Stimson Center*, 20 March, 2023

- Lennie Phillips wrote the article "[What's a chemical weapon? A global weapons treaty could use some clarity](#)" for the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 12 April, 2023

Multimedia

- Project member Thilo Marauhn explains the implications of the use of chemical weapons for the norm against such weapons in the SWR2 report "[Chemische Kampfstoffe – Von Chlorgas bis Nowitschok](#)", 17 April, 2023
- In a *Stanley Center for Peace and Security* [video story](#), Andy Weber, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defense Programs, describes how multinational cooperation and respectful relationships with counterparts in other countries contributed to the successful elimination of Syria's chemical weapons stockpile during the Syrian civil war, 17 April, 2023
- And in another [video story](#) from the *Stanley Center for Peace and Security*, former Assistant Secretary of State for Nonproliferation Tom Countryman talks about getting chemical weapons out of Syria, 17 April, 2023
- The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* offers the free webinar "[Global Biolabs 2023 Report on laboratories handling the world's most dangerous pathogens](#)" on YouTube, March 2023

Coming up!

- Biological Weapons Convention, [Working Group on the Strengthening of the Convention](#), Second Session, Geneva, 7-18 August, 2023
- [Training Programme on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation of WMD 2023](#), T.M.C. Asser Institute (The Hague), 18-22 September, 2023
- [104th Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW](#), The Hague, 10-13 October, 2023
- [28th Chemical Weapons Convention Conference of the States Parties](#), The Hague, 27 November – 1 December, 2023
- Biological Weapons Convention, [Working Group on the Strengthening of the Convention](#), Third Session, Geneva, 4-8 December, 2023

- Biological Weapons Convention, [Meeting of States Parties](#), Geneva, 11-13 December, 2023



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