

Article36

Patterns in participation: Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, 2010-14

This briefing paper was prepared for delegates at the 2016 Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention. It draws on data and analysis from an Article 36 project to map and analyse developing countries' participation across a range of multilateral disarmament forums.

For more information, see:

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Introduction

Participation data for the international meetings between 2010 and 2014 of thirteen multilateral forums addressing disarmament and weapons issues shows the significant underrepresentation of lower income countries, certain regions and women in these processes.

Lower income countries are less likely to be members of treaties or forums on weapons and disarmament. Low-income countries also ratify treaties at a slower rate on average than high-income countries (with the exception of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention from 2003). Lower income countries are less likely to meet their reporting obligations under these instruments. They are less likely to attend, speak at or hold formal roles in multilateral meetings on disarmament and weapons issues. Where they do attend, they field smaller delegations.

Across the board, women are significantly underrepresented in multilateral disarmament forums, making up less than a quarter of country delegates, leading around a fifth of country delegations at meetings, and giving less than a fifth of their statements on average.¹

Article 36 has collected quantitative data on the international meetings of: the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (MBT); the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT); the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC); the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC); the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW); the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM); the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); meetings on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT); the Conference on Disarmament (CD); the UN General Assembly First Committee; the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (POA); the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC); and international conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons (HINW).

This briefing paper summarises patterns in participation for meetings of the BWC within this dataset, comparing these to other forums and averages across the data.

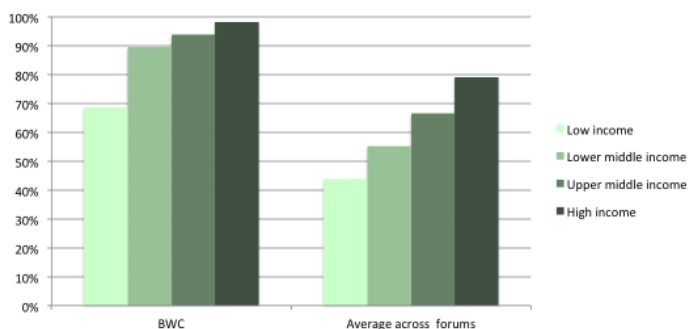
Treaty membership and reporting

As was the case for most forums (a notable exception being the MBT), the percentage of countries within any income group² that were members of the BWC at December 2015 was smaller the lower the country income group (Fig 1).

However, the variation between income groups in the proportion of ratifications³ was lower for the BWC at December 2015 than was found within the membership of the ATT, the CCW and its protocols and the CD. On the other hand, BWC membership was more unequal across income groups than membership of the MBT, CTBT, CCM, attendance at any given HINW meeting, CWC, and the NPT.

As Fig 1 shows, the BWC has a high level of membership across most income groups – membership is most significantly diminished amongst low-income countries as a category.

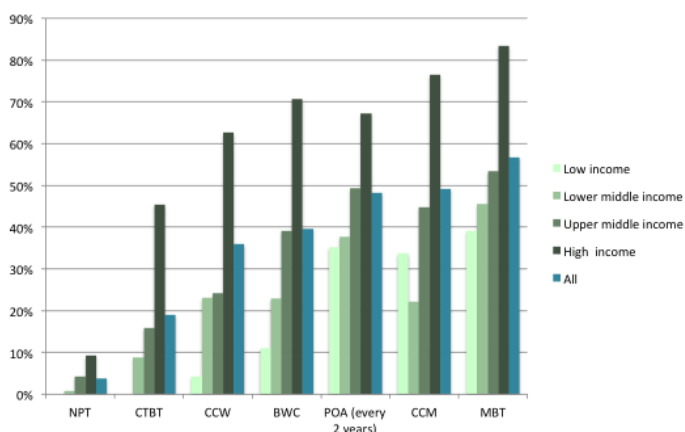
Fig 1. Membership: proportion of states in each income category



On reporting, data was collected on reports submitted under the requirement for annual reports of the CCW, MBT and CCM, and biennial reports under the POA, as well as national reports submitted to the NPT, Article XIV activity reports for the CTBT, and confidence-building measures submissions for the BWC.

Fig 2 shows the average patterns of annual reporting for each of these processes. In every case, reporting amongst high-income country members is significantly higher than any other income group.

Fig 2. Average percentage of members/states submitting reports each year



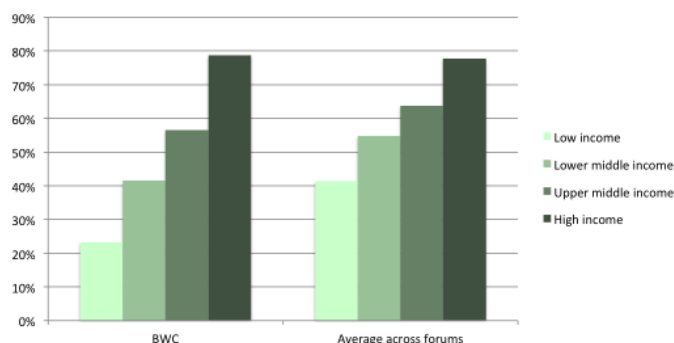
At the BWC, only 11% of low-income country members report each year on average, and only 4% of low-income country members of the CCW.

Attendance patterns

On average across the dataset, using UNGA regional groups as an indicator of attendance by region, international meetings were best attended by Western European and Others Group (WEOG) states, followed closely by Eastern European states. The percentage of states within the regional group attending on average decreased significantly for Asia-Pacific states, followed by Latin American and Caribbean states, with African states attending in the lowest proportions. This general pattern is reflected in data for BWC meetings, with 10% fewer Asia-Pacific and more than 10% fewer African states attending than the average across the dataset.

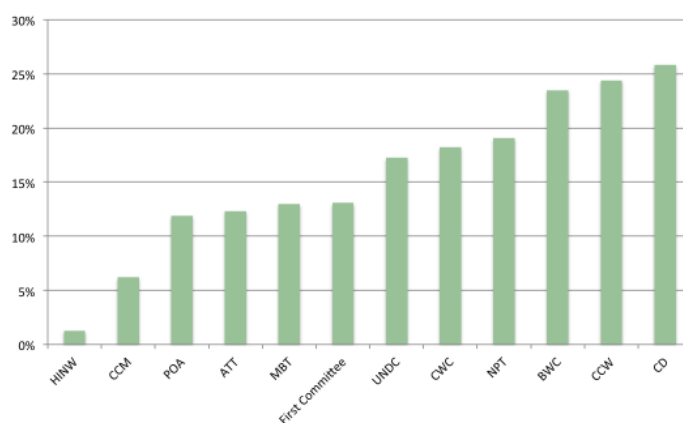
Fig 3 shows average attendance of all countries by income category at the BWC compared to the average across available attendance data.

Fig 3. Average % of countries in each income category attending international meetings 2010-14



The BWC was one of the more unequally attended forums by income group in the dataset, as illustrated by Fig 4 (which uses standard deviation from mean attendance as an indicator of the spread of proportions of attendance between income groups).

Fig 4. Average variation in attendance between income categories (standard deviation from the mean)



Sponsorship programmes were highlighted by all of those interviewed for Article 36's research⁴ as vital to ensuring more equal participation between higher and lower income countries, and amongst civil society organisations.

Of the forums with the least inequality in attendance between countries in different income groups (as per Fig 4), one did not have a sponsorship programme (First Committee) and four did (the ATT, CCM, HINW, MBT and POA). Two of the least equally attended forums (the BWC and CCW) also run sponsorship programmes. Financial support to certain delegates to attend individual meetings is of course not the only factor in lower-income countries' attendance (with for example prioritisation based on key national goals and interests, perceived relevance – identified by some interviewees as a factor in lower attendance at the BWC – as well as the perceived effectiveness of processes some of the major factors). However, the limited data available on the MBT and CCM shows the significant impact that larger sponsorship programmes can have – and the BWC and CCW sponsorship programmes are, on the other hand, small.

At the BWC, no delegates could be sponsored to one of the meetings in the dataset because of inadequate funds. In the data available for this study (for the MBT, CCM, BWC and CCW), the number of countries contributing to sponsorship programmes in any given year was very low (five or fewer). Many of the same countries contributed across several processes.

This is clearly not a sustainable model of funding, and creates a higher risk to the functioning of the programmes should any country decrease their contributions or decide to pull out. Interviewees noted that levels of funding for sponsorship declined as treaties got older, highlighting for example that the numbers of delegates sponsored to attend CCM meetings were comparable to the levels for the MBT at a similar point in time from treaty agreement.

Speaking patterns

Looking at the dataset by regional group, on average across all forums around two-fifths of WEOG states spoke at any given meeting, a quarter of Asia-Pacific states, a fifth of Eastern European and Latin American and Caribbean states, and around 15% of African states. At the BWC, these proportions were 18%, 17%, 15%, 15% and 9% respectively.

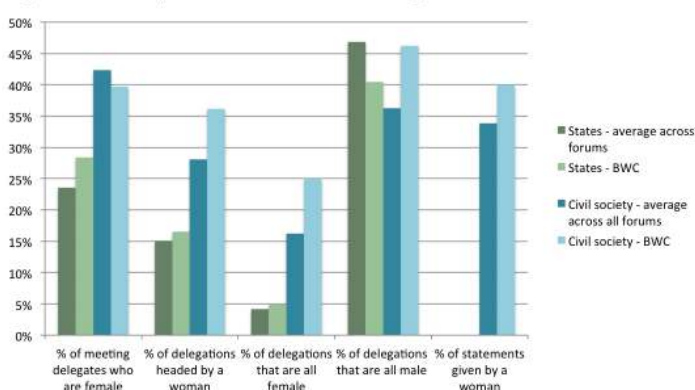
By income group, on average at any given meeting across the dataset 34% of high-income countries spoke, 30% of upper middle-income countries, 26% of lower middle-income countries and 14% of low-income countries. For the BWC these proportions were 15%, 23%, 16%, 5%. First Committee and the UNDC were the only other forums where high-income countries were not speaking in the highest proportions.

The BWC had a lower than average variation in statement-making between different country income categories (again using the standard deviation from the mean proportion of statements made as an indicator), with the CD, CWC, CTBT and NPT the most unequal.

Participation of women

Fig 5 compares the overall averages of the available data on women's participation for states and civil society across the forums studied between 2010 and 2014 with average participation figures at BWC meetings (data on the gender of individuals speaking on behalf of individual countries at the BWC was too incomplete to be usable for analysis).

Fig 5. Participation of women at BWC meetings 2010-14



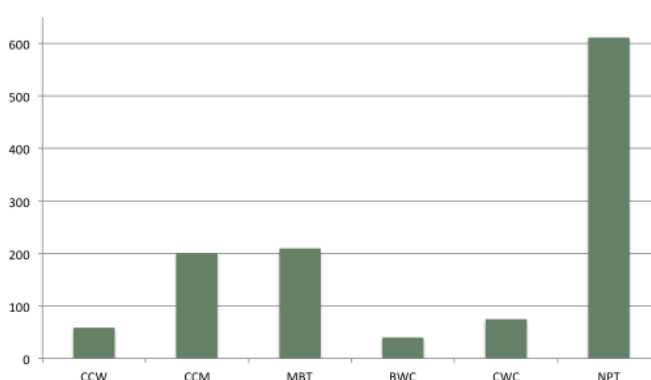
In terms of the participation of women on behalf of states, the BWC was slightly better than average, with more female delegates and delegation heads, and a lower proportion of delegations composed entirely of men – though these still made up 40% of delegations at BWC meetings on average.

For civil society, 40% of civil society delegates to BWC meetings were women on average, compared to 42% across all forums, with civil society attending the BWC fielding more female leaders for the delegations (36%) and more speakers (40%) than the average across forums. Civil society attending the BWC also fielded more all-female and all-male delegations – which may be explained by a significant number of delegations of one person.

Civil society participation

For the forums where delegation data was available for at least some meetings, the highest average volume of civil society registration was at the NPT, where over 600 delegates registered on average for meetings. Amongst other processes addressing weapons of mass destruction, for the BWC the figure was 39, and the CWC 74 (Fig. 6). This may be partially indicative of the level of global civil society attention given to these respective issues – and in particular the concern that civil society has paid to nuclear weapons as a global issue over a number of years.

Fig 6. Number of civil society delegates registering to attend meetings (available data)



The BWC had the lowest average number of civil society delegates registering for the forums where data was available.

In terms of the profile of civil society attending the international forums studied, of the 541 civil society organisations and coalitions recorded in the data as attending or giving statements at the meetings covered, 379 were headquartered in high income countries, and 351 in WEOG countries. Where participant lists were available, 90% of registered civil society organisations were from high-income countries at any given meeting, on average, and 86% from WEOG countries. Almost 95% of civil society statements or presentations recorded in the data were delivered by an organisation or coalition based in a high-income country, and 92% by those based in WEOG countries. This analysis will underestimate the participation of organisations from lower income countries that have registered to attend or are speaking under the umbrella of a coalition headquartered in a high-income country (for example, registrations under the ICBL-CMC at meetings of the CMC and MBT). Disaggregated data on this was however unavailable.

At the BWC, the available data on the average profile of civil society participation at any given meeting is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Country of headquarters of civil society organisations participating at BWC meetings by income group and region, average across meetings 2010-14

Low income	0.00%	African Group	0.24%
Lower middle income	2.33%	Asia-Pacific Group	0.56%
Upper middle income	1.04%	Eastern European Group	2.33%
High income	95.33%	Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC)	0.79%
		Western European and Others Group (WEOG)	94.78%

Conclusion

The underrepresentation of developing countries and women amongst civil society and states at multilateral forums must be addressed, along with other forms of marginalisation. The data presented in this paper suggests that participation at the BWC is more unequal between country income groups than other disarmament and weapons forums studied on some indicators (such as attendance at meetings, and in the proportionally low levels of membership amongst low income countries) and may be less unequal on others (such as in individual country statements made). The BWC appears to perform slightly better than the average across the dataset in the participation of women, but the numbers are still far from indicating equal representation. Civil society participation was the lowest in the available data across the forums studied. These results suggest avenues for engagement that those aiming to address unequal participation at the BWC may wish to pursue.

END NOTES

¹ See Elizabeth Minor (2016), 'Disarmament, Development and Patterns of Marginalisation in International Forums', Article 36 available at: <http://www.article36.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/A36-Disarm-Dev-Marginalisation.pdf> as well as Article 36 (October 2015), 'Women and multilateral disarmament forums: Patterns of underrepresentation', available at: <http://a36.co/1SJ11pW>. More detailed information on methodology and terms can be found in the annexes to these papers

² Using OECD-DAC categorisations, grouping LDCs and OLCs in to 'low income countries'

³ Using the standard deviation from the mean percentage of countries that are members as a measure of equality in membership between different income groups. This measure describes the size of the difference between the percentage of countries that are members in each income category and the average percentage of countries that are members across all categories – a higher standard deviation therefore indicates a greater difference in levels of membership between country income categories

⁴ In addition to collecting quantitative data, we conducted 20 interviews with representatives of states, NGOs and international organisations, all speaking in a personal capacity

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