

Implementation of Article VII of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, Sweden 2022

1. Sweden has not received any request for assistance nor requested assistance under Article VII of the Convention.

International assistance

2. The Eighth Review Conference reaffirmed that the international community should be prepared to dispatch emergency assistance in case of use of bacteriological (biological) or toxin weapons, and also to provide assistance, including humanitarian and other assistance to the requesting State Party.”¹ Further, the Eighth Review Conference noted “the need for a procedure for assistance by which timely emergency assistance can be provided, including to better identify accessible information on the types of assistance that might be available in order to ensure prompt response and timely emergency and humanitarian assistance by States Parties, if requested in the event of use of biological weapons”².
3. Sweden has capabilities to provide and support international assistance. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), tasked by the Swedish Government to develop national societal capability to prevent and handle crises, can also participate in rapid response crisis operations and support efforts aimed at strengthening crisis preparedness and recovery in other countries. MSB is the national contact point for the European Civil Protection Mechanism (ECPM) with the mandate to operate as a point of contact for international crisis assistance, from and to Sweden. MSB coordinates Swedish assistance and supports international coordination when other countries or UN organisations request support during crises and disasters. MSB has capability to assist with in-house expertise and resources, including solutions for basecamps, transport and logistics, communication, as well as command, control and coordination. Sweden hosts one of the rescEU stockpiles of medical reserve under the ECPM. The stockpile, financed by the EU, was established by MSB with support from the Swedish Defence Materiel Administration and the National Board of Health and Welfare. MSB can also mediate contacts to or mobilise resources from other national agencies. MSB, in accordance with the appropriation directions from the Swedish Government, continuously works to integrate gender equality aspects into international emergency operations.
4. In 2018 and 2020 Sweden, in addition to core funding to the WHO, allocated USD 3.4 and 3.8 million, respectively, to the WHO Contingency Fund for Emergencies (CFE). CFE provides the WHO with resources to respond rapidly to disease outbreaks and health emergencies, to help save lives, help prevent unnecessary suffering, reduce costs of controlling outbreaks and emergencies, as well as

¹ BWC/CONF.VIII/4 (VIII.VII.33)

² BWC/CONF.VIII/4 (VIII.VII.38)

reduce wider social and economic impacts. In 2019, Sweden made a voluntary donation of USD 0.2 million to the WHO Health Security Interface Programme, with the aim to strengthen the capacity of the WHO to handle deliberate disease outbreaks.

5. Sweden has made substantial contributions to the global fight against the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences. These contributions included in part core support to a number of organizations, such as WHO, Unicef and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which helped enable them to modulate their activities to handle the pandemic. In addition, Sweden during 2020 and 2021, via the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), donated more than USD 150 million to handle the pandemic. Resources were also made available to meet indirect consequences of the pandemic, and Sweden has contributed to the World Bank pandemic response in low- and middle-income countries. With respect to vaccines against Covid-19, Sweden has contributed with USD 250 million to Covax, of which USD 220 million will be paid over a 10-year period. Until May 2022 Sweden has donated over 14 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine. Examples of practical assistance include support from the Centre for Research on Health Care in Disasters at Karolinska Institutet, a WHO collaborating centre, which in 2020-2022 assisted the WHO in building capacity for intensive care of Covid-19 patients in Lebanon. The centre has also participated in the establishment of the WHO Emergency Medical Teams initiative, a mechanism for rapid distribution of medical personnel and for quality assurance of medical care. Furthermore, in October 2021, the rescEU stockpile hosted by Sweden was activated when 80 ventilators were dispatched to Latvia to support Covid-19 patient treatment.
6. Sweden complies with Article VII, also by supporting efforts to strengthen the United Nations Secretary General's Mechanism (UNSGM) to investigate allegations of biological weapons use. For details on recent Swedish activities in support of UNSGM, see the Swedish BTWC Compliance Report of 2022.
7. Sweden remains committed to strengthening global health security. This includes support for the implementation of the International Health Regulations. The Swedish Government and specialized government agencies contribute to dedicated activities on a regular basis, through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms. Sweden has for example contributed with external experts to a substantial number of Joint External Evaluations to support the assessment of IHR capacities in other countries. Sweden is also engaged in EU Joint Actions on topics to detect and respond to outbreaks. For example, in the SHARP Joint Action (Strengthened International Health Regulations and Preparedness in the EU) the Public Health Agency of Sweden is leading a work package on Strengthening IHR Core Capacities and Analysis. The Public Health Agency of Sweden further contributes to global health security through international collaboration, both via bilateral collaboration with countries and as a partner in various regional and global programs and organisations. For example, the Government of Sweden and the Public Health Agency, together with the World Health Organization (WHO) country office for Somalia, assist the Federal Ministry

of Health Somalia by providing support in establishing the National Institute of Health (NIH) Somalia (for further information, please see the Swedish BTWC Article X report of 2022).

8. Sweden is a member of the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction (GP). Sweden has participated in the work of the biosecurity sub-working group since its inception, with Sweden serving as co-chair for the group in 2019.

National preparedness

9. According to paragraph 40 of the Final Document of the Eight Review Conference, States Parties' national preparedness and capacities also contribute directly to international capabilities for response, investigation and mitigation of outbreaks of disease, including those due to alleged use of biological or toxin weapons.³
10. In Sweden, several authorities at national, regional and local level share responsibility for the prevention and handling of infectious disease outbreaks in humans. The Public Health Agency has the overarching responsibility for protection against contagious diseases and for coordination of disease control measures in humans. The Public Health Agency, as designated National IHR Focal Point with qualified experts accessible at all times, maintains preparedness and response capacity at designated Points of Entry and reports on Sweden's IHR core capacities via the State Party Annual Report (SPAR). The Public Health Agency continuously follows the epidemiological situation concerning communicable diseases and especially those listed in the Communicable Diseases Act. Notifiable diseases must, according to Swedish law, be reported by diagnostic laboratories or treating physicians to the County Medical Officer and to the Public Health Agency. The Public Health Agency also conducts several other forms of surveillance, including through voluntary laboratory reporting of certain diseases, sentinel surveillance where a selection of physicians or clinics report on the prevalence of a disease, and syndromic surveillance by examining visitor statistics from geographical regions' websites for medical information. The Public Health Agency holds specialists in epidemiology, risk assessment, personal protection equipment and analysis of infectious disease agents, and diagnostic laboratories from lower levels of containment to biosafety level 4 (BSL-4).
11. The Swedish Board of Agriculture is responsible for preparedness, contingency planning and handling of infectious diseases in animals, and of pests in plants. In this, the Board cooperates with other authorities such as the National Veterinary Institute, the National Food Agency and the county administrative boards. The National Veterinary Institute has laboratory capacity for diagnosis of infectious agents in animals and animal feed, performs epidemiological investigations, maintains disease mitigation preparedness and supports government and private sector with expert advice. In addition, the Swedish University of Agricultural

³ BWC/CONF.VIII/4

Sciences (SLU) contributes with scientific advice and technical support in relevant areas.

12. With the aim to further strengthen the national capability and capacity, four governmental agencies with responsibility for the national laboratory diagnostics of high-consequence pathogens, the Public Health Agency, the National Veterinary Institute, the Swedish Food Agency, and the Swedish Defence Research Agency, in 2007 formed Forum for Biopreparedness (FBD). FBD activities include harmonization of diagnostic methods, equipment, quality assurance protocols and biosafety practices between their BSL-3 laboratories and FBD also develops capacity for use of alternative reagents and methods, and thus continues to improve Swedish biopreparedness. Since 2017 the Swedish Armed Forces, and since 2019 the Swedish Police, have participated in FBD joint projects with the collective aim of further strengthening civil military cooperation and national biopreparedness capacity.
13. With respect to Sweden's preparedness to receive international assistance in the event of a major crisis, MSB has published information, together with guidelines on the subject, to assist relevant Swedish stakeholders.