

## Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

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**Website:** [www.un.org/disarmament/](http://www.un.org/disarmament/)

**Year of establishment:** 1982

**CTITF Working group Membership:**

- Preventing and Responding to WMD Terrorist Attacks
- Border Management Related to Counter-Terrorism

The United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) provides substantive and organizational support for norm-setting in the area of disarmament and nonproliferation through the work of the General Assembly and its First Committee, the Disarmament Commission, the Conference on Disarmament, and other bodies. UNODA also promotes strengthening of the disarmament regime in respect to weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons, as well as conventional weapons, especially landmines and small arms. The UNODA is also involved in the development of practical measures to foster the postconflict disarmament and demobilization of former combatants and support their reintegration into mainstream society. The office consists of five branches:

- Conference on Disarmament (CD) Secretariat & Conference Support Branch (Geneva)
- Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch (WMD)
- Conventional Arms (including Practical Disarmament Measures) Branch (CAB)
- Regional Disarmament Branch (RDB)
- Information and Outreach Branch (IOB)

In the context of counterterrorism activities, UNODA supports efforts aimed at denying terrorists the means to carry out attacks using chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) weapons and to strengthen states' capacities to prevent terrorists' use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery. To that end, UNODA provides support to the Security Council's 1540 Committee and relevant measures to implement the 2006 UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (henceforth, *Global Strategy*).<sup>123</sup> UNODA is actively engaged in areas related to the committee's outreach activities, assistance, and capacity building; it cooperates with international, regional, and subregional organizations (IROs); and interacts with

civil society in order to promote and facilitate the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540. Since 2006, the office has organized a number of regional and subregional seminars and workshops on the implementation of Resolution 1540 with the participation of 136 different countries.

In response to a recommendation outlined in the Global Strategy, UNODA maintains a roster of experts and laboratories, as well as technical guidelines and procedures, which are available to the UN Secretary-General to investigate any alleged use of CBRN weapons.<sup>124</sup> The first training course for experts from the roster, hosted by the government of Sweden in 2009 and organized in cooperation with UNODA, resulted in the establishment of a core team of experts trained to perform relevant fact-finding missions. UNODA maintains close cooperation with international organizations to enhance the capabilities of this investigative mechanism. Additionally, the UN and the World Health Organization have concluded a special memorandum of understanding that outlines specific areas and modalities of cooperation in the preparation and conduct of investigations.<sup>125</sup>

The Global Strategy also invites the UN system to develop “together with Member States, a single comprehensive database on biological incidents, ensuring that it is complementary to the biocrimes database contemplated by the International Criminal Police Organization.”<sup>126</sup> Consequently, ODA has developed, together with UN member states and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), a single comprehensive database on biological incidents or “biocrimes.”<sup>127</sup> A template of the Biological Incident Database (BID) has been developed as a tool for collating reports, lessons learned, and information about assistance available to affected states. The reporting of bio-incidents is guided by a distinction between three types of incidents: outbreaks of disease due to natural causes, outbreaks of disease due to accidents, and incidents related to deliberate misuse of biological agents.<sup>128</sup> ODA has briefed member states on several occasions about the progress made on this tool and has developed a secure web-based pilot platform for data entry by member states on a trial basis.<sup>129</sup>

Represented by its WMD branch, ODA is a member of the CTITF

Working Group on Preventing and Responding to WMD Terrorist Attacks, which is led by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and co-chaired by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).<sup>130</sup> The working group has produced two reports; the first launched in September 2010 during the second biennial review of the Global Strategy, focusing on interagency coordination in the event of a nuclear or radiological terrorist attack. The report examines the experiences of established regimes and protocols for nuclear or radiological security. The second report, released in November 2011, examines the institutional response capabilities in the event of a terrorist attack using chemical or biological materials for the first time at the international level, and recommends ten ways to enhance and coordinate the currently disparate response mechanisms. UNODA is also a member of the CTITF Working Group on Border Management Related to Counter-Terrorism.