



**Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security NGO Statement
2017 Meeting of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention
Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland
December 4-8, 2017**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Representatives, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

The Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security appreciates this opportunity to address the 2017 Meeting of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). Our organization is engaged in research and policy analysis across the spectrum of health security, including prevention, detection, response, and recovery. We also study the policies necessary to develop and maintain resilience to biological emergencies, both domestically and internationally. Our Center was established in 1998 at Johns Hopkins University, and we currently house a multidisciplinary research staff, including professionals from the life sciences, social sciences, public health, medicine, law, public policy, and national security. As a nongovernmental organization, we see our role as communicating with scholars, scientists, the policymaking community, and the private sector about ways to improve biosecurity policies. We convene expert working groups, conferences, and congressional seminars to provoke new thinking and action, and we are committed to educating the next generation of scholars, practitioners, and policymakers and to fostering international connections between those working to improve biosecurity.

For more than four decades, the BWC has served as an effective global mechanism to prevent the development, proliferation, and use of biological weapons. This 2017 Meeting of the States Parties provides an opportunity to reaffirm the authority of this vital instrument for our collective global security. It is crucial that the global norms against the use of biological warfare remain intact and keep pace with the rapid rate of progress in the life sciences. Currently, the BWC and its associated norms are facing an array of challenges. A number of high-profile incidents over the past several years involving the use of chemical weapons and the development and testing of nuclear weapons not only threaten the established norms against the use of these classes of weapons, but also potentially erode those related to biological weapons as well.

We welcome the prospect of a substantive, fully resourced intersessional period in which States Parties and civil society can work together to achieve a future more secure from the threat of biological weapons and the misapplication of science and emerging biotechnologies. In our view, the BWC and its stakeholders would benefit greatly from a robust and adequately resourced Implementation Support Unit (ISU) that can conduct the important work of universalizing the treaty and provide the necessary infrastructure for the successful implementation of the BWC. A

fully functioning ISU could also support efforts to identify, document, and report on advances in the life sciences. We also believe that mechanisms such as formal Confidence-Building Measures are a valuable and effective component of the BWC to promote transparency at the national level, and all States Parties should be actively encouraged to submit them. Some States Parties may require technical assistance from other States Parties or NGOs in completing these submissions.

In order to strengthen the norms associated with the BWC, the broader science and policy communities should be proactively engaged and encouraged to become more involved. Biology is inherently dual-use, and it is not possible to prevent access to many of the world's most dangerous pathogens or the equipment and techniques required to manipulate them. As biological research increasingly occurs outside the direct control of governments, and sometimes without oversight by government programs, the responsibility for transparency, accountability, and responsible use often falls to scientists themselves. Educating scientists and stakeholders outside of government and promoting their role in maintaining the norms established by the BWC can promote adherence to these norms in the broader scientific community. It is critical that these stakeholders become more involved, both to identify and assess emerging risks and threats and to work together to ensure the safe, responsible, and peaceful use of science.

NGOs are well situated to bridge the gap between the BWC and the broader scientific and policy communities. With NGO partnership and support, government officials and nongovernmental scientists and experts can have expanded opportunities to engage in open discussion on these issues that may not be possible otherwise. These discussions can identify challenges and solutions to complex issues, establish and strengthen personal relationships critical to collaboration, introduce the new perspectives of rising experts, and draw on expertise from topic areas that otherwise do not appear in formal discussions. We believe that strong multigenerational and multisectoral networks facilitate information sharing and can forge the relationships that constitute the BWC's foundation of support—both within and beyond the walls of the United Nations.

With this in mind, we would like to call your attention to several initiatives that our Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security has undertaken to facilitate the development of collaborative multisectoral and multigenerational biosecurity networks. First, our Center hosts a bilateral, track 2 dialogue between India and the United States. This dialogue seeks to expand knowledge and understanding between the two countries regarding natural and deliberate biological threats, deepen relationships between scientists and technical experts, examine new developments in biotechnology and their implications for biosecurity policy, and identify issues that may warrant official government-to-government attention. Second, we also lead a track 2 Southeast Asia Biosecurity Dialogue involving participants from Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and the United States. This forum focuses on national and regional efforts to address bioterrorism and bioweapons nonproliferation, emerging infectious diseases, laboratory biosecurity, and national policies regarding these issues.

Finally, joining us this week in Geneva are nine Fellows from our Emerging Leaders in Biosecurity Initiative (ELBI). Our network of more than 125 Fellows represent government, academic, nongovernmental, and private organizations from the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. These Fellows are part of the future generation of biosecurity experts, and they are already contributing to practice and policy in the fields of bioethics, epidemiology, infection control, medical and public health preparedness, medical countermeasure development, biological research, and nonproliferation. The Fellows are looking forward to observing this week's discussion, attending side events, and engaging with the delegations to better understand the current challenges facing the BWC and the future needs of bioweapons nonproliferation efforts. While our fellowship currently includes Fellows from only three countries, we believe that the BWC benefits from the ideas from the rising leaders in all States Parties.

In closing, we again encourage the BWC and States Parties to actively facilitate engagement with the broader international scientific and policy communities. The current and next generation of scientists, policymakers, and nonproliferation experts are looking to the BWC and the delegates for guidance and leadership in this time of uncertainty and heightened risk, and they are eager to contribute.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to share this information. We wish you a very productive meeting.

Very respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Inglesby". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tom" written in a smaller, more compact script than the last name "Inglesby".

Thomas V. Inglesby
Director, Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security

The Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security works to protect people from epidemics and disasters and build resilient communities through innovative scholarship, engagement, and research that strengthens the organizations, systems, policies, and programs essential to preventing and responding to public health crises. The Center is part of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and is located in Baltimore, MD.