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## ATLANTIC STORM LESSONS AND CONCLUSIONS

**Preparation will matter:** Nations must begin working together now to prepare systems that will support a collaborative international response to destabilizing epidemics, whether of natural cause or the result of bioterrorism. National leaders will not be able to create such systems in the midst of a crisis. Furthermore, diplomatic and political preparation, while critical, will not matter if appropriate medicines, vaccines, and medical and public health capacity are lacking, so systems must be comprehensive in scope.

**Increased knowledge and awareness are essential:** National leaders must become as knowledgeable of the unique challenges posed by destabilizing epidemics as they are of “traditional” terrorism and national security threats. As they do for all other security threats, leaders should have on hand a “check-list” of immediate actions they must take in response to bioterrorism.

**“Homeland” security must look abroad:** Homeland security cannot be achieved without attention to the abilities of neighboring states and allies in preventing and responding to large epidemics. Uncontrolled epidemics will spread across borders, threatening illness, death, societal disruption, and economic and political destabilization. Biosecurity will only be achieved through a holistic approach to homeland security—one that looks beyond each country’s geographical boundaries.

**The World Health Organization’s authority must be aligned with expectations:** World leaders should provide the WHO with resources and authority commensurate with the broad and serious expectations they have of the organization’s role in responding to international epidemics of infectious diseases. Today, in spite of all expectations, the WHO has concrete and serious budgetary, political, and organizational limits which will only be overcome through concerted action by the WHO’s member states.

**Effective communication between nations and with the public is critical:** National leaders must be able to establish effective and accurate lines of communication with other world leaders and with the public. Otherwise, time, which is always critical in responding to an epidemic, may be wasted, and leaders may lose the public’s acceptance and trust when they need it most. Communication plans that seek to engage citizens constructively in emergency response should be established and tested well in advance.

**Adequate medical countermeasures must be developed:** World leaders should work together to make significant investments in biomedical research and development of medicines and vaccines, as well as to undergird and strengthen hospitals and public health systems, all of which are essential to biosecurity. The current lack of medical countermeasures to infectious diseases and the inability to quickly increase global production of those that do exist may force leaders to employ disease control options such as border closures that could be socially, politically, and economically destabilizing and serve to turn a crisis into a catastrophe.

**Biosecurity is one of the great global security challenges of the 21st century:** One of the great challenges of our century is preventing the deliberate use of disease as a weapon for killing millions, destabilizing economies, and disrupting societies. One of our great opportunities is to take steps that will make us both strong and resilient in the face of destabilizing epidemics – be they natural or intentional. Our biosecurity measures must always be more potent than any bioweapon used against us or any novel infectious diseases that emerges to threaten our health and well being.