



**Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security NGO Statement
2018 Meeting of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention
Geneva, Switzerland
December 4-7, 2018**

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Delegates,

The Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security appreciates this opportunity to provide input to the 2018 Meeting of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). Our Center, established in 1998, houses a multidisciplinary research staff, including professionals from the life sciences and social sciences, public health and medicine, engineering, law, public policy, and national security. We conduct research and policy analysis across the spectrum of health security, including prevention, detection, response, and recovery for a myriad of biological and health threats, including the deliberate misuse of biology.

One of the many significant challenges currently facing the BWC is the rapid and continued emergence of advanced biology and biotechnology capabilities. The ability to manipulate and synthesize pathogen genomes, using widely accessible equipment and techniques, has developed far more rapidly than the BWC, and these capabilities threaten to outpace the BWC's ability to understand and prevent or react to the potential consequences. New scientific knowledge and tools have the potential to revolutionize an array of industries, bolster economies around the world, and generate solutions to complex problems facing human health and other fields; however, considerable uncertainty remains regarding the ability to target their application for beneficent purposes only.

Engaging directly with scientists is essential to identifying existing and emerging threats and developing potential solutions. It is our strong belief that current scientific advice and input will help the BWC remain a pillar of international nonproliferation efforts. To that end, and to facilitate engagement between States Parties delegations and the scientific community, the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security hosted the inaugural annual Global Forum on Scientific Advances Important to the BWC on Monday, December 3, in Geneva, Switzerland. The one-day meeting was scheduled to coincide with the Meeting of States Parties to facilitate direct engagement between States Parties delegations and a diverse international group of experts who represent a broad range of advanced and emerging biological fields of study. With 16 panelists and speakers, representing 11 countries across 5 continents, and attendees from various nongovernmental organization (NGOs) as well as States Parties, this event provided an opportunity for scientists to speak directly to States Parties about their pioneering work and for



policymakers and nonproliferation experts to inform scientists about the importance of the BWC and its associated norms. We intend for this meeting to be a reliable annual occurrence for future BWC meetings so that the States Parties can remain informed about fast-moving developments in the life sciences that are relevant to the BWC.

In addition to providing advice to the Convention, efforts such as the Global Forum and longstanding work from others, such as the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP), have another benefit: promulgating the norm against biological weapons development for a new generation. The BWC was ratified in 1975, before many contemporary scientists—even tenured scientists—entered their respective fields. Given the decades of peaceful expansion of biology and biotechnology, the concept of deliberate misuse of biology is often largely unfamiliar to scientists in many branches of the biological sciences. Opportunities to introduce the norms expressed by the BWC are valuable, therefore, not only for the education of individual scientists, but to strengthen the norm against bioweapons within the scientific community. Much of advanced scientific research occurs outside the direct purview and oversight of government regulatory programs, so scientists themselves often serve as the first line of defense against the deliberate misuse of biology. Formally engaging with scientists to establish and maintain a foundation of support for bioweapons nonproliferation norms within the scientific community is essential to ensuring the continued success of the BWC.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to provide this input to the 2018 Meeting of States Parties. We wish you a very productive meeting.

Very respectfully,

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.