



# Ninth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

Statement on behalf of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security.  
Abbreviated version delivered by Ms. Anita Cicero, Deputy Director

Mr. Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, I appreciate the opportunity to address the 9<sup>th</sup> Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. For nearly a quarter century, our Center has housed a multi-disciplinary research staff, including professionals from the life and social sciences, public health and medicine, engineering, law, public policy, finance, international relations, and national security. We conduct research and policy analysis across the broad spectrum of health security, including deliberate biological threats. Our efforts span prevention, detection, response, recovery, and resilience against a myriad of biological threats at the local, national, and global levels.

Rapidly emerging advancements in biology and biotechnology continue to yield expanded capabilities that increase both the benefits and risks to the BWC. There are no broadly accepted international norms or guiding principles, however, for promoting biosecurity in life sciences research. To address this gap, the [Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Scientists](#) were developed collectively by the Interacademy Partnership (IAP), including technical experts from numerous National Academies of Science; the Tianjin University Center for Biosafety Research and Strategy; and the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. These experts reached consensus agreement on a framework to promote the responsible conduct of research and guard against the misuse of biology. These Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines provide a basis for governments, institutions, funders, publishers, and scientists to create new or refine existing biosecurity codes of conduct to ensure that cutting-edge biological research

is used for peaceful purposes, as intended by the BWC. We urge States Parties to endorse the Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines at the 9<sup>th</sup> Review Conference and prioritize identifying appropriate implementation mechanisms during the next Intersessional Period.

Looking beyond the 9<sup>th</sup> Review Conference, we urge States Parties to identify further opportunities to educate research institutions about the Guidelines and advance similar tools to raise awareness of biological risks and opportunities among global stakeholders, including BWC delegations, other policymakers, and frontline scientists. The inclusive international process used to formalize the Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines with scientists and experts demonstrates the continued value of substantive and technical debate in BWC fora to address priority topics of concern identified by the States Parties and to generate concrete tools and solutions to these complex challenges.

With the 9<sup>th</sup> Review Conference, States Parties have an opportunity to establish priorities and goals for the next 5 years, particularly with respect to strengthening both treaty implementation and the norm against biological weapons. In order to make substantive progress on these issues, States Parties must begin by thinking critically about what they hope to gain from the BWC. The ongoing stalemate on core BWC issues like verification and compliance assessment stems, in part, from fundamental disagreements regarding their respective scopes and purposes. Restricting debate to these specific terms or concepts risks further delays in identifying and implementing mechanisms capable of increasing assurance in States Parties' compliance with their BWC obligations. As States Parties consider priority topics for debate in the next Intersessional Period, we encourage them to focus on what they truly want from the treaty, what benefits they envision verification or compliance assessment regimes providing. Do States Parties want to document and confirm the absence of biological weapons research and development? Increase transparency regarding biological activities? Ensure participation in specific treaty mechanisms? These are all noble pursuits that require very different approaches and tools, and identifying the desired endgame is the first step to selecting and developing appropriate tools to achieve those goals.

Notably, it is not necessary to identify and implement a comprehensive package of mechanisms all at once. Continued inaction on these issues breeds opacity and ambiguity, which foment mistrust and conflict. Conversely, transparency increases certainty and builds trust, and substantive progress toward assurance in States Parties' compliance facilitates broader use of biology for peaceful purposes. And considering the rapid pace of biological discovery, what is necessary and possible today may not be what is necessary and possible tomorrow. And a comprehensive package today may not be comprehensive tomorrow. Restricting substantive debate to only a comprehensive package of mechanisms not only hinders efforts to increase assurance in States Parties' biological activities, it also potentially

limits States Parties' ability to expand the scope of these activities in the future to address emerging risks and leverage new capabilities. We encourage States Parties to identify shared goals, select mechanisms to support those goals, and implement them incrementally to increase assurance.

Thank you again to the Chair and Delegates for the opportunity to address the 9<sup>th</sup> BWC Review Conference. We stand ready to provide support in any way we can, and we wish you a very productive meeting.

Very respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Inglesby', written in a cursive style.

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.