

Statement on Biological Security Education to the Biological Weapons Convention - Ninth Preparatory Committee on behalf of the Biological Security Research Centre, London Metropolitan University, UK

4 April 2022

Dear Chair and Distinguished Representatives

We recall that one of the topics that States Parties have agreed to consider during the annual Meetings of Experts on Review of Developments in the Field of Science and Technology Related to the Convention (MX2) in 2018-2020 concerns the development of a voluntary model code of conduct for biological scientists and all relevant personnel, and biosecurity education.

A Working Paper introduced by China and Pakistan during the Meeting of Experts in 2018 noted that

2. *“Biological researchers are not only at the front line of bio-science and technology development, but also constitute a primary line of defense against the misuse and abuse of bio-technology. To raise bio-safety and security awareness and enhance ethical self-discipline among biological researchers is key to prevention of misuse and abuse.”*¹

We welcome the *Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Scientists* that were developed in 2021 and endorsed by the Inter-Academy Partnership.² We draw States Parties’ attention to the element of the Guidelines titled Education and Training which specifically refers to the value of education and training about the implications of biological research.³

To support awareness-raising of chemical and biological security issues among stakeholders in chemistry and life sciences, the London Metropolitan University in the UK has published an innovative information resource. This resource uses the cartoon format to communicate chemical and biological security issues in an engaging and easily assimilated form. The resultant cartoon series titled “Strengthening the web of prevention against chemical and biological weapons” comprises five thematic cartoons.⁴ The development of the cartoon series draws upon the common use of illustrative material (e.g. graphs, figures, diagrams, etc.) in science practice. The series is freely available via the London Metropolitan University resource repository in 13 languages: Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian, and Urdu. Further information about this initiative will be provided during a virtual lunch-time side event, “Biosecurity for All: The Role of Scientists” on Wednesday, 6 April 2022.

¹ China and Pakistan, *Proposal for the development of a model code of conduct for biological scientists under the Biological Weapons Convention*, BWC/MSP/2018/MX.2/WP.9, 9 August 2018, <https://meetings.unoda.org/section/bwc-mx-2018-mx2-documents/>.

² China and Pakistan, Co-sponsored by Brazil, *The Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Scientists*, BWC/MSP/2020/WP.7, 22 November 2021, <https://meetings.unoda.org/section/bwc-msp-2020-documents/>.

³ Johns Hopkins Center for Public Health, Tianjin University, and IAP, *The Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Scientists*, July 2021, <https://www.interacademies.org/publication/tianjin-biosecurity-guidelines-codes-conduct-scientists>.

⁴ London Metropolitan University (LMU), *Heightened Risk of Disease as a Means of Terrorism, say international security experts*, Press release, 30 June 2021, <https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/news/spotlight/heightened-risk-of-disease-as-a-means-of-terrorism-say-international-security-experts/>.

Future biological security will require effective biorisk management at the international, regional, national, professional and institutional levels. We welcome the draft *Global guidance framework for the responsible use of the life sciences* that is currently being developed under the auspices of the World Health Organisation.⁵ We further welcome the proposals on the dissemination of the Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines that have been put forward for consideration during the 2020 Meeting of States Parties.⁶ We encourage States Parties to endorse the Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines at the Ninth Review Conference of the BTWC and consider practical arrangements to facilitate the exchange of experience, lessons learned, and good practices on fostering biosecurity education, awareness, and outreach during the Intersessional Programme in 2023-2025.⁷

Thank you Chair and Distinguished Representatives.

This statement has been endorsed by:

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Dr Brett Edwards, University of Bath UK

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⁵ World Health Organisation, *Global guidance framework for the responsible use of the life sciences*. WHO, Geneva, 22 February 2022, <https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/call-for-comments---who-global-guidance-framework-for-the-responsible-use-of-the-life-sciences>.

⁶ China and Pakistan, *Progress on Dissemination of the Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Scientists*, BWC/MSP/2020/WP.13, 25 November 2021, <https://meetings.unoda.org/section/bwc-msp-2020-documents/>.

⁷ China and Pakistan, *The Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Scientists*. BWC/MSP/2020/WP.7, 22 November 2021, <https://meetings.unoda.org/section/bwc-msp-2020-documents/>.