



# *Biosafety and Biosecurity International Consortium*

## Message from the Biosafety and Biosecurity International Consortium (BBIC)

### to the Meeting of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention

Geneva, 10 December 2012

#### *BBIC Steering Committee:*

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Lebanon, President*

*Dr Nisreen Al Hmoud, Jordan  
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*Ms. Heather Sheeley, UK*

*Dr Khalid Tamsamani, Morocco*

*Dr Ghazi Yehia, Lebanon*

#### *Secretariat:*

*Mr Terence Taylor*

*Mr Tim Trevan*

*Ms. Whitney Ray*

Mr President, Distinguished Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen – thank you for this opportunity to address you today on behalf of the Biosafety and Biosecurity International Consortium, BBIC.

BBIC is a network of individuals from 22 countries\* aimed at helping develop healthier and more secure communities in the Middle East and North Africa region through encouraging the development of comprehensive national and regional biosafety and biosecurity strategies. The aim of these strategies is to help governments and communities develop the human, physical and legislative capacity and infrastructure to permit effective national preparedness, planning and emergency response to major biological events, be they from natural outbreaks or accidental release, or from an act of warfare or terrorism.

In line with the decisions of the Third BBIC Conference held in Amman in September 2012, the Consortium is now developing a series of national, sub-regional and regional activities aimed at building up regional capacity to prevent, mitigate and respond effectively to biological events. These include:

1. national efforts to establish biosafety associations to promote awareness of and best practice in biosafety and biosecurity;

\* Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, the Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, UAE, Yemen

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2. sub-regional training of laboratory staff both in biosafety and biosecurity, and in improving disease surveillance across borders to respond more effectively to disease outbreaks; and
3. sub-regional efforts to promote the responsible conduct of science and to guard against the misuse of science for nefarious purposes.

In my own country of Lebanon, we have an ambitious plan to set up a national biosafety and biosecurity committee across the whole of our government, and through this mechanism, develop a national strategy to prevent, mitigate and respond to harmful biological events. Once this is in place, we plan to hold a national tabletop exercise to test the strategy against various national emergency scenarios and thereafter adjust the strategy based on the lessons learned. Next week, we start the preparatory meetings with all the involved ministries, and the first national strategy meetings will be held in January 2013. We hope that, by this time next year, we shall be in a position to report on the results of the exercise.

Lebanon also will host the 4<sup>th</sup> BBIC Conference in Beirut in October 2013. We look forward to, once again, inviting the President of the BWC and other delegates to our conference.

The BBIC strongly supports the objectives of the Biological Weapons Convention and will continue to promote them in the Middle East and North Africa. We look forward to continuing to partner with both governments and civil society in the MENA region to help further the objectives of the BWC.