

Declaration on Biological Security by the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction¹

“Berlin Lines of Action”

7 October 2022

The members of the G7-led Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction met in Berlin on 5–7 October 2022, and recognized 20 years of successful chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threat reduction work since the launch of the Global Partnership. While serious threats from all manner of weapons and materials of mass destruction persist, there can be no doubt that Global Partnership CBRN threat reduction efforts over the past two decades have contributed to a safer and more secure world.

In discussions with security experts and stakeholders from academia, civil society and the business community, we focused on identifying the most pressing biological threats we are facing today. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the potentially devastating effects of newly emerging pathogens on our societies, regardless of whether naturally occurring or accidentally or deliberately released. This pandemic underscores the need to intensify our efforts to enhance both our national and global preparedness to prevent, detect, and respond to biological threats.

We see persisting and newly emerging biological threats, stemming from both state and non-state actors, and acknowledge that while rapid developments in the life sciences offer new ways to fight diseases, they could also pose a potential risk for abuse to develop biological and toxin weapons. In this context, we reaffirm our commitment to the mitigation of global biological threats and are determined to pursue the following lines of action jointly as the Global Partnership, and as States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC):

1. We commit to continue implementing concrete projects around the world to combat biological-related terrorism and proliferation. We will continue to be guided by the GP’s Biosecurity “Deliverables”², which provide the parameters for common and coordinated action by GP members to: secure and account for dangerous pathogens; prevent the deliberate misuse of pathogens; enhance regional surveillance networks; reinforce biological non-proliferation instruments; and promote responsible conduct in biological sciences.

¹ Declaration on behalf of the following GP members: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, European Union, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States.

² <https://www.gpwmmd.com/bswg-deliverables>

2. We call on all States Parties to the BWC to engage constructively at the 9th Review Conference, to be held from 28 November until 16 December 2022 in Geneva, in order to overcome the longstanding stalemate of the Convention. The international community must come together and act jointly to make the BWC fit for the challenges of the 21st century. We call for decisions by the Conference to enhance compliance, increase transparency, promote confidence building, and strengthen the operational effectiveness of the Convention. Hence, we support an experts group to study these issues and identify concrete steps to strengthen implementation of the Convention in all its aspects.
3. We underline the need to examine the new opportunities and challenges that rapid developments in the life sciences and biotechnology create. We support the establishment of a systematic and structured mechanism for reviewing technical and scientific developments relevant to the BWC at the 9th Review Conference. We commit to raising awareness on challenges in areas such as dual-use research of concern (DURC), DNA synthesis technology, and biological cybersecurity. In response to these challenges, we will explore suitable threat reduction measures in the context of the BWC and the Global Partnership that would not impede peaceful scientific exchange and progress. To this end, we will increase our engagement with stakeholders from academia, business, and civil society, and foster cross-sectoral co-operation among actors from the security and health communities.
4. We condemn in the strongest terms the disinformation activities by the Russian Federation targeting in particular threat reduction measures conducted by members of the Global Partnership. We express our deep concern that these malign disinformation activities are aimed at undermining unity among the BWC States Parties and at discrediting legitimate and peaceful international co-operation and assistance in the life sciences and biotechnology, including in the context of the Global Partnership, conducted in line with Article X of the BWC. The Global Partnership's cooperative efforts have not only improved biosafety and biosecurity capacities, but also directly strengthened implementation of the BWC. We are determined to denounce such disinformation, while at the same time demonstrating maximum transparency of our global co-operation and threat reduction activities. In this context, we recall the statement on Ukraine delivered by the German Presidency on behalf of the Global Partnership on 29 March 2022³, and reaffirm our support for and continued co-operation with our partner Ukraine in our joint efforts to counter the spread of biological weapons and material, equipment, and technology for use in such weapons.
5. The international community must remain vigilant and be able to respond quickly and decisively to biological attacks. We declare our continued support

³ <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/-/2519872>

for the United Nations Secretary-General's Mechanism (UNSGM) for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. As the only established international mechanism mandated to investigate alleged uses of biological weapons, we pledge to maintain our engagement to ensure that the mechanism is properly resourced, equipped, and operationalised to conduct effective investigations when needed. We commend the Capstone Simulation Exercise conducted in Germany from 19 until 28 September which demonstrated the operational readiness of the mechanism. We are determined to maintain the independence of the mechanism, while being ready to explore co-operation and coordination with mechanisms for global health emergency response.

6. We highlight that the Signature Initiative to Mitigate Biological Threats in Africa (Africa Signature Initiative), developed and delivered by the Global Partnership in close co-operation with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), other African partners, and the BWC Implementation Support Unit has deepened and enhanced work with partner countries and organisations in Africa to strengthen capacities to prevent, detect and respond to biological threats posed by high-consequence pathogens. We pledge to intensify our work based on the Initiative's four pillars: i) biosafety and biosecurity, ii) national frameworks and implementation, iii) surveillance and epidemic intelligence and iv) non-proliferation. We support multilateral and bilateral high-level engagement to reach out to countries that are not yet States Parties to the BWC and encourage them to accede to or ratify the Convention.
7. We reaffirm our commitment to gender equality in the creation and delivery of our programmatic activities, based on the objectives expressed in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and UN General Assembly Resolution 75/48 of 17 December 2020 on "Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control." We commit to raise awareness to the gender-related impact of biological threats and to mainstream adequate responses in the formulation of our threat reduction activities.
8. In delivering effective biological threat reduction programming, we recognize the imperative of multi-sectoral engagement and commit to continue to champion collaboration at the health-security interface. We commend the important contributions to the Global Partnership's biosecurity efforts that are made by partners from across the health-security spectrum, including international organisations, regional organisations, and civil society.
