

**Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention  
Meeting of States Parties  
NGO Statements  
1 December 2008**



Mr Chairman, Distinguished Representatives:

The London School of Economics and Political Science greatly appreciates the opportunity to offer this statement. As we did at the Meeting of Experts, we will again limit our focus to just one of the many important topics covered this year, namely education.

In our August statement we noted that there were many outstanding questions about education. These include: Who is it we are aiming to educate? What it is we want to educate them about? And, how are we going to educate them? In this statement we would like to provide some brief answers to these questions and to offer some suggestions for how States Parties might prioritise their outreach efforts.

For States Parties that have yet to initiate educational activities, we suggest first and foremost targeting practising life scientists working in academia. Open up a dialogue with your national universities and educational institutions, as well as with any relevant professional and industry associations and national science academies. The development of an informational leaflet, either from scratch or by adopting those that have already been produced by others, can be a simple and cost-effective way of doing this. Identifying key opinion formers and leaders in the field and engaging them to raise awareness at the local level can also be a way to open up the dialogue that involves relatively little cost and effort.

What we suggest the scientists should first and foremost be educated about is the dual use potential of life science research and the risks of misuse, and how they can recognise the security risks of their own work. And while the field of life sciences can include a bewildering array of disciplines, it can be helpful to start by targeting the most relevant ones: microbiology, cell biology, molecular biology and genetics.

It has been demonstrated by our colleagues Brian Rappert and Malcolm Dando that a useful way of teaching practising life scientists is through interactive seminar discussions, and our colleague Marie Chevrier has shown that role playing exercises can form an important element within such seminar discussions.

For States Parties that are more ambitious and have the resources available, we suggest also targeting life science students in universities and secondary education. Work with your universities and schools to introduce modules or individual lectures into the life science curricula, that aim to raise awareness about dual use and misuse as well as about the history of offensive biological weapons programmes and the Biological Weapons Convention. Provide support for training teachers, developing appropriate teaching materials and adapting textbooks.

Continue your efforts to educate practising life scientists, but expand the range of disciplines targeted.

Bring together the relevant stakeholders to discuss the kind of research you are concerned about in your individual contexts, and to develop guidance on risk assessment criteria. The US National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity has done a lot of work on identifying what it terms 'dual use research of concern' which can helpfully be drawn on by others.

For States Parties that are more ambitious still, we suggest broadening the focus of your educational activities even further to also include scientists in government institutions, in private industry and in the military, as well as the wider public. We would encourage you to support the development of websites, videos, publications and other sources of information, alongside the development of accredited courses specifically dedicated to dual use potential and the risks of misuse.

We have so far focused on what individual State Parties can do, but there is also a role for you as a group. As collective States Parties you this year have the opportunity to provide an important signal to those associated with the life sciences regarding the need to maintain and reinforce the prohibition against the deliberate spread of disease. To build a reinforcing synergy between the disparate and fragile educational activities currently underway, States Parties need to actively promote and fund collaborations between countries, institutions and individuals so that their experiences, achievements, problems and concerns can be shared. You, more than most people, are well placed to show national leadership on educational activities, as well as to take coordination of national efforts forward on a multilateral level. It is critically important that States Parties use this year's opportunity to foster concrete and effective action on education to further the aims of the BWC.

In closing, we feel it appropriate to remind ourselves that, in the context of the BWC, education along with the other topics discussed at this year's meetings and in the other years of the intersessional process, are not a goal in and of themselves. While important, they can only form a limited contribution to the main goal of the Convention. Let us not forget that there are other, more effective ways to ensure that biological weapons are not used for hostile purposes or in armed conflict, and as the Convention states, no effort should be spared to minimize this risk. There is still a great deal of political work ahead to strengthen and ensure the robustness of the BWC. We encourage States Parties – now that we are at the halfway point between the two Review Conferences of 2006 and 2011 – to start refocusing efforts to increase transparency and build more confidence among States Parties that no programmes or activities are taking place in contravention of the Convention.

We thank you for your attention.

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