Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security NGO Statement
2019 Meeting of States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention
Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland
December 3-6, 2019

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

On behalf of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security (the Center), I appreciate the opportunity to address the 2019 Meeting of States Parties to the Biological & Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC MSP). For more than twenty years, 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 for a myriad of biological and health threats and address these health security threats at the local, national, and global levels.

Since 1972, 183 States Parties have committed to prevent the development and use of biological weapons and strengthen national and global capacity to respond to deliberate biological threats, but States Parties do not stand alone in this fight. Political and technical experts from around the world—representing a broad scope of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, philanthropies, and the private sector—remain similarly committed to preventing the atrocities associated with the deliberate misuse of biology.

With this in mind, the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security has implemented a number of important efforts that support various aspects of the BWC. Notably, the Center partnered with the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) to host the second annual Global Forum on Scientific Advances Important to the BWC, held on December 2 to coincide with the MSP. The event was attended by BWC delegations, international organizations, and other experts from around the world, and it aimed to bring together scientists and policymakers to both inform States Parties on emerging science and technology capabilities and to build awareness of and support for the BWC and nonproliferation norms among the scientific community. The Center is also hosting and participating in several side events during the 2019 MSP. On December 3, the Center will present on Event 201, an international tabletop exercise held on October 18 in New York in partnership with the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. During the exercise, senior national health leaders and private sector executives focused on engaging the private sector to mitigate the health, economic, social, and political consequences of novel respiratory virus pandemic. On December 4, the Center will participate in a side event hosted by the InterAcademy Partnership and the US National Academy of Sciences,
Engineering, and Medicine on *Qualitative Frameworks to Assess Risks and Benefits of Advances in Science and Technology: Results of an Experts Meeting*, which will discuss risk assessment frameworks for emerging science and technology capabilities. And on December 5, the Center will co-host an event with the InterAcademy Partnership and US National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *Through the Lens of the Biological Weapons Convention: Global Trends in the Life Sciences with a Potential Impact on the Convention*, which will summarize a series of regional workshops, sponsored by the European Union, exploring emerging science and technology trends and their potential relevance to the BWC. Additionally, the Center is providing technical support to the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) to conduct a series of workshops for ASEAN States Parties, sponsored by Japan, on preparedness to respond to deliberate biological weapons use.

The Center recently supported ongoing efforts to update World Health Organization (WHO) preparedness and response guidance for deliberate biological and chemical events, and the Center was commissioned by the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board to assess the state of preparedness for a high-impact respiratory pathogen pandemic. The report included specific considerations for deliberate events and delineated high-level priority actions for international organizations, countries, and civil society to undertake to improve resilience to severe pandemic events. These findings influenced the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board's recommendations provided in their first annual flagship report “A World at Risk.”

The Center also hosts two international biosecurity dialogues between the US and partners in India and Southeast Asia, convening government officials and other experts to collaborate on complex health security risks, including deliberate biological threats. In October, the Nuclear Threat Initiative, *The Economist* Intelligence Unit, and the Center jointly published the Global Health Security Index, which evaluated health security capacity for 195 countries and provided recommendations to national and international communities and the private sector to establish and maintain prevention and response capacity for health emergencies, including deliberate biological events.

We call on civil society organizations around the world to continue and expand their support of the BWC. These organizations have the experience and expertise necessary to tackle many issues relevant to the BWC, and they can provide tremendous insight from the front lines of emerging capabilities and threats. We encourage civil society broadly, including those organizations that have not historically engaged in BWC-related issues, to establish and develop an evidence base on which States Parties can draw in their efforts to strengthen the BWC and bolster associated biological weapons nonproliferation policies and norms. We similarly call on States Parties to leverage civil society organizations and their work and to learn from globally recognized experts in order to implement best practices and identify novel solutions to complex challenges. We are
rapidly approaching the 9th Review Conference of the BWC, and the time to establish a programme of work for the 2022-2025 Intersessional Period will arrive quickly. We encourage States Parties to seek out and consider input from non-governmental experts and civil society organizations, both in their own countries and around the world, when determining priority topics for debate during the 2022-2025 Intersessional Period. Non-governmental and civil society organizations around the world support the BWC and the associated nonproliferation norms, and we have a broad set of assets and expertise available to support States Parties’ efforts to strengthen the BWC.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman and delegates, for the opportunity to address the 2019 Meeting of States Parties. We wish you all a very productive meeting.

Very respectfully,

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.