

# Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

Statement delivered by Mr. Francesco Marelli, Head of Unit, UNICRI  
Geneva, 5 December 2017

Thank you, Mr. President.

UNICRI would like to commend you and the BWC Implementation Support Unit for your hard work in preparation for this important event. UNICRI wishes to express our support and cooperation in ensuring a productive meeting.

UNICRI would like to mention some practical examples of innovative activities that in 2017 have contributed to the reinforcement of international cooperation and assistance under Art. X of the Convention.

First of all, as an implementing agency of the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence, UNICRI would like to show how the Centres have become an innovative initiative aimed at reinforcing coordination and trust and offering technical expertise and assistance to countries that need support in the domain of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) risk mitigation.

A very good example of how effective the Centres are is the recent **Pilot African Regional Conference** (25-26 October 2017) held in Rabat, Morocco, which sought to identify priorities for capacity building in the context of the post-Ebola crisis. The Conference was the result of a joint effort between the G7 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction (chaired by Italy) and the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence Initiative. Eleven African countries from the Centres of Excellence African Atlantic Facade and Eastern and Central Africa attended the Regional Conference (including Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia, Mauritania, Morocco, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo), together with members of the Global Partnership (the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Canada and United States of America) and international organizations (World Health Organization, INTERPOL, the Implementation Support Unit of the Biological Weapons Convention and UNICRI).

The eleven countries, with the support of the participating international organizations, conducted a comprehensive comparative analysis based on existing needs assessments, including: CoE CBRN National Action Plan, 1540 National Implementation Action Plan, the WHO IHR (2005) Joint External Evaluation (JEE) and the Extended National Assistance Implementation Programmes under EU Council Decision 2016/51.

The key output from the Regional Conference was a table of priorities and regional trends. The comparative analysis and the resulting table represent, in essence, the biosafety and biosecurity pillars that countries view as essential to supporting continued capacity-building efforts in the wake of the West African Ebola crisis. They are viewed as essential to assisting countries, and the region as a whole, to more effectively prevent, detect, and respond to future disease emergencies – whether natural, accidental or deliberate in origin.

UNICRI hopes this work will stimulate the development and implementation of projects on the regional scale. More generally, we hope that the **Pilot African Regional Conference** in Rabat will be used as a model to better coordinate cooperation and assistance under Art. X of the Convention in Africa and other geographical regions.

Another example of how countries are reinforcing cooperation within the framework of the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence are the **donor conference meetings** that the Governments of Lebanon and Georgia organized in Beirut (28 September 2017) and Tbilisi (3 November 2017) respectively. The conferences showed that Lebanon and Georgia are developing donor coordination mechanisms through which CBRN National Teams monitor and inform donors about how the countries are progressing in implementing their CBRN National Action Plans and what steps still remain. A similar conference will be organized by the Government of Cambodia on 11 December 2017.

Finally UNICRI would also like to mention another initiative that is contributing to the reinforcement of cooperation and assistance under the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC): the **International Network on Biotechnology (INB)**. The INB is a global network of academic and research institutions committed to advancing education and raising awareness about responsible and secure conduct in the life sciences. Focusing on the latest developments in the life sciences and biotechnology, the INB supports the (co-)development and sharing of educational materials covering the themes of biosafety, biosecurity and bioethics.

Administered by UNICRI, in collaboration with the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the INB works closely with partner organizations engaged in complementary missions, including the BWC ISU, WHO, OIE, INTERPOL, and others.

We would like to invite all delegations to take advantage of the educational resources that have already been collected, as well as the immersive and user-friendly training modules that will be launched in the coming weeks. These modules utilize a variety of audiovisual technologies (including videos and virtual reality) to communicate awareness-raising messages tailored to the needs and cultures of Network Partners.

Thank you.