



the global network of science academies

Statement by The Biosecurity Working Group of IAP: The Global Network of Science Academies August 2015

Ambassador Muhammad, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:

It is an honor to have the opportunity to represent the Biosecurity Working Group of IAP: The Global Network of Science Academies* and to describe some of the recent activities of the Working Group, IAP member academies, and other international scientific organizations.

The IAP Biosecurity Working Group was established in 2004, with the mission of helping to mitigate the risk that developments in science and technology could be misused for biological weapons or terrorism, without unnecessarily impeding global scientific progress. The Working Group is currently chaired by the Polish Academy of Sciences and includes the national academies of Australia, China, Cuba, Egypt, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The Working Group's efforts are largely focused in two areas: 1) promoting awareness-raising about biosecurity issues and encouraging the responsible conduct of science, and 2) considering trends in relevant areas of science and technology and convening members of the scientific community to discuss their potential implications for the operation of the BWC. The IAP's efforts are largely conducted through holding events and by working in partnership with national academies of sciences and other international organizations.

Scientific communities can play key roles in supporting the concept that appropriate biosafety and biosecurity planning is part of the norms of responsible scientific practice. This view is echoed in the 2012 IAP/IAC report on *Responsible Conduct in the Global Research Enterprise*, which states that "researchers have learned that they cannot dissociate themselves from the uses of the new knowledge they generate." The report further notes that "many areas of science and technology can be used for destructive as well as constructive purposes, and researchers have a special responsibility to understand and address issues of 'dual use'."¹ Discussing biosecurity with younger scientists may sometimes be seen as difficult or even inappropriate. The Working Group would like to encourage States Parties to continue to engage with their national scientific associations and academies of science to foster a broad understanding of responsible conduct, one that includes biosecurity as one among many potential ethical, legal, and social concerns of which scientists should be aware.

Other recent activities of the Working Group include workshops in 2014 on advances in understanding pathogenicity² and in 2015 on advances in microbial and bio-based production. These workshops were convened in Geneva immediately preceding the annual Meeting of Experts with themes tied to the current program of intersessional science topics. Looking forward, the IAP is once again pleased to announce that it will hold an international workshop in September, in partnership with the Royal Society, Polish Academy of Sciences, and U.S. National Academy of Sciences, to provide input from the scientific community to inform preparations for the Eighth Review Conference next year. Preliminary findings from this workshop will be available prior to the Meeting of States Parties in December.

*IAP (formerly the InterAcademy Panel on International Issues) is a global network of over 100 science academies in a partnership "committed to making the voice of science heard on issues of crucial importance to the future of humankind."

The Working Group is also pleased that Dr. Peter McGrath from the IAP Secretariat is here at this meeting, and will share information on science diplomacy efforts undertaken under the auspices of our partner organization TWAS, the world academy of sciences for the advancement of science in developing countries. These efforts seek to engage scientists in critical, multinational topics such as sustainable resource management and to build a bridge between the worlds of science and diplomacy.³

In closing, the IAP Biosecurity Working Group wishes the States Parties every success in your work this week, and we thank you again for providing the opportunity to address you today.

1. <http://www.interacademies.net/file.aspx?id=19789>
2. http://www.iapbwg.pan.pl/images/files/Pathogenicity_Workshop_Summary.pdf
3. <http://twas.org/science-diplomacy>