
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

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Standing agenda item: strengthening national implementation

The United States Government's Bio-transparency and Openness Initiative

Submitted by the United States of America

I. Background

1. At the Seventh Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) Review Conference, Secretary Clinton underscored the U.S. Government commitment to building an environment of openness and collaboration in our biodefense enterprise and outlined a set of unilateral, voluntary planned activities for the U.S. Bio-transparency and Openness Initiative. The goal of the Initiative is to help build understanding of our biodefense programs, encourage transparency among all States Parties, and demonstrate our work in countering biological threats and improving global health security.

II. Reporting on planned activities

2. The United States is pleased to report that on July 24, 2012 a cross-section of Geneva-based Ambassadors, including the current BTWC chairman, Algerian Ambassador Boujemâa Delmi, visited our National Interagency Biodefense Campus at Fort Detrick, Maryland. The ambassadors toured the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases and the National Biodefense Analysis and Countermeasure Center of the Department of Homeland Security and received briefings from senior representatives from the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, Health and Human Services, Agriculture and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The visit provided insights into U.S. programs and facilitated greater understanding of the nature and scope of U.S. biodefense activities. This also demonstrated the "whole of government" approach the U.S. follows for biodefense and provided an opportunity to share ongoing international cooperation and assistance, which is vital in this area. For additional information, please visit: <http://geneva.usmission.gov/2012/08/03/ft-detrick/>.

3. Another key part of this Initiative was the International Conference on Health and Security (ICHS) held in Washington, D.C. on September 5-6, 2012, which attracted

participants from 30 countries and included experts from foreign affairs, law enforcement and public health communities, representatives from international organizations, including the World Health Organization, Pan American Health Organization, World Organization for Animal Health, INTERPOL, the BTWC Implementation Support Unit, as well as from industry and the scientific and NGO communities. The Conference also highlighted the value of collaboration on biological threat prevention, preparedness and response. Further ICHS details and highlights can be found by visiting: <http://geneva.usmission.gov/2012/09/27/ichs2/>.

III. Next steps: promoting transparency in biodefense

4. Through the Bio-transparency and Openness Initiative, the United States will continue to seek opportunities for collaboration among international foreign affairs, health and law enforcement officials, scientists and other members of the broad BTWC community. We believe the strength of the BTWC will be enhanced by States Parties working together in a cooperative and transparent fashion, increasing confidence in compliance with the BTWC, and improving implementation of their treaty obligations.
