

**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**

22 November 2021

English only

2020 Meeting

Geneva, 22-25 November 2021

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Consideration of the factual reports of the Meetings of Experts
reflecting their deliberations, including possible outcomes

**Article X Cooperation and Laboratory Support:
The Example of the Biological Threat Reduction
Program**

Submitted by the United States of the America

1. International science and technology collaboration plays a critical role in maximizing the beneficial applications of life sciences research and emerging biotechnologies for medicine; human, animal, plant, and environmental health; agriculture; and other aspects of well-being and public good. The United States is committed under Article X of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) “to facilitate ... the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials, and scientific and technological information for the use of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins for peaceful purposes.” In particular, the United States strongly supports cooperation that enhances the international community’s capacity to detect, prepare for, and respond to disease outbreaks and other biological threats—whether naturally occurring, accidental, or deliberate. In the spirit of cooperation and transparency, we welcome exploring how our collective resources, experience, and lessons learned can enhance the BWC and strengthen the global norm against biological weapons.

2. The ongoing pandemic has reinforced and highlighted the urgent need to strengthen the BWC. Cooperation and transparency, under Article X, are explicitly intended for peaceful purposes, including bio-surveillance. Indeed, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of global bio-surveillance and the power of international scientific cooperation and collaboration.

3. The United States Congress authorized the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) to initiate what is now known as the Biological Threat Reduction Program (BTRP) in 1997 to eliminate and demilitarize biological weapons infrastructure inherited by Russia. Because of its military nature, this task fell to the DoD. The effort also included a Cooperative Biological Research Program aiming to engage Russian scientists who participated in the former Soviet Union biological weapons program through direct U.S.-Russia cooperation on research that addressed urgent public health needs and development of medical countermeasures for especially dangerous



pathogens. Over the following 10 years, BTRP initiated similar projects with other Former Soviet Union (FSU) countries including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and Armenia. The specific activities jointly conducted between the U.S. and partnering countries were designed to adapt former biological weapons infrastructure and expertise to peaceful uses that benefit both the country and global health security. The objectives of these partnerships are to:

- Consolidate and secure collections of especially dangerous pathogens;
- Enhance biosecurity and biosafety at vulnerable sites;
- Strengthen the capacity for public health and veterinary health systems to detect, diagnose, and report infectious disease outbreaks rapidly and accurately;
- And, where relevant, eliminate any residual biological weapons infrastructure.

4. Today, BTRP continues engagements beyond the FSU to achieve these objectives across Africa; Eastern Europe; South, Central and Southeast Asia; and the Middle East. Countries that have received support from BTRP are listed here, with the number of current BTRP-supported facilities in parentheses after each country name:

Armenia (16)	Liberia (1)
Azerbaijan (13)	Malaysia (11)
Cambodia (21)	Nigeria (4)
Cameroon (4)	Pakistan (2)
Ethiopia (5)	Philippines (22)
Georgia (24)	Senegal (3)
Guinea (1)	Sierra Leone (1)
India (7)	South Africa (9)
Indonesia (3)	Thailand (8)
Iraq (31)	Turkey (4)
Jordan (9)	Uganda (7)
Kazakhstan (4)	Ukraine (26)
Kenya (7)	United Republic of Tanzania (6)
Lao People's Democratic Republic (12)	Uzbekistan (39)
Liberia (1)	Viet Nam (35)

5. The United States is proud to have partnered with so many countries to strengthen their biological laboratory capacities safely and securely. As demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic, partner nations have leveraged capabilities previously supported by BTRP, including laboratory facilities and public health emergency operations centers, as part of their preparedness and response efforts to detect and report outbreaks caused by dangerous pathogens—including detecting and diagnosing COVID-19.

6. These facilities are owned and operated by the countries where they are located. BTRP plays an important role in providing cost-free assistance that improves capacity-building and reaffirms nonproliferation norms, consistent with broader United States' cooperation efforts under Article X. The support for, and application of, the life sciences for peaceful purposes is an imperative that has become clearer as the world has suffered tremendous loss and disruption due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
