



# *Biosafety and Biosecurity International Conference*

## **Message from the Biosafety and Biosecurity International Conference Process (BBIC Process)**

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*Dr Nisreen Al Hmoud, Jordan  
President*

*Dr Ma'an Al Hakim, UAE*

*Dr Suleiman Al-Busaidy, Oman*

*Dr Bassam Al Hijawi, Jordan*

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*Ms. Heather Sheeley, UK*

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*Dr Ghazi Yehia, Lebanon*

### ***Secretariat:***

*Mr Terence Taylor*

*Mr Tim Trevan*

*Ms. Whitney Ray*

At the Third Biosafety and Biosecurity International Conference, held in Amman in September 2011 (BBIC-2011) under the auspices of HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal, participants agreed to send a message to the Biological Weapons Convention Review Conference. They considered it important to bring to the Review Conference's attention the significant contribution that the BBIC Process makes towards biosecurity in the region and the value of the Process in ensuring the promulgation *inter alia* of the values of the Convention to the institutional and personal level of those involved in the life sciences in the Middle East and North Africa. They also urged other regions to draw on the BBIC Process as a possible model to respond to their respective priorities to enable safer management of biological risks, be they natural, accidental or intentional.

The BBIC Process is a network of individuals from 22 countries\* aimed at helping develop healthier and more secure communities in the Middle East and North Africa region through encouraging the development of comprehensive national and regional biosafety and biosecurity strategies. The aim of these strategies is to help governments and communities develop the human, physical and legislative capacity and infrastructure to permit effective national preparedness, planning and emergency response to major biological events, be they from natural outbreaks or accidental release, or from an act of warfare or terrorism.

Clearly, the BBIC Process' objectives overlap with those of the Biological Weapons Convention. Ensuring that the life sciences are not misused for weapons purposes is a critical part of assuring the health security of communities. And this is a task

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\* Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, the Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, UAE, Yemen

### ***BBIC Secretariat Office***

*International Council for the Life Sciences*

*4245 Fairfax Drive, Suite 625*

*Arlington, Virginia USA 22203*

*Phone: +1 202-659-8058 Fax: +1 202-659-8074*

*www.icscharter.org www.BBIC-2011.org*

that takes more than just government action. Our communities are best served when individuals, institutions and government work together to ensure that the very best standards and practice in biosafety and biosecurity are universally adopted and that science and its exploitation for the benefit of society are conducted responsibly. While governments can legislate, build infrastructure and train personnel, developing and maintaining a culture of scientific responsibility and vigilance requires the continual involvement of the individuals and institutions conducting the science. It is precisely at this junction between the 'top down' and 'bottom up' approaches that the BBIC Process seeks to work in order to ensure that governments, industry and academia all work together towards the same goal of healthier and more secure communities.

To this end, the BBIC Process has written, endorsed and published a Framework Document, mapping how national and regional biosafety and biosecurity strategies can be developed. Actions taken thus far to implement the Framework Document have included biosafety and biosecurity training sessions, workshops to promote and establish national and regional biosafety associations, seminars to promote the responsible conduct of science and the adoption of industry best practices, and a study on the design of a regional biosafety and biosecurity training centre and the curricula to be taught. Future actions will include national, sub-regional and regional implementation activities.

The BBIC Process strongly supports the objectives of the Biological Weapons Convention and will continue to promote them in the Middle East and North Africa. We wish the Review Conference great success and look forward to continuing to participate in its future activities.