



Speech, Ms. Kristiina Kangaspunta, UNICRI Deputy Director
Biological Weapons Convention, Seventh Review Conference

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning/afternoon,

I would like to thank Ambassador Paul van den IJssel, the President Designate of the review conference, for giving me the floor and the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit for the organization of this important event.

I am greatly honoured to be present at this enlightened gathering. The review process allows us to reconsider and reformulate our response in accordance with the evolving character of the biological threat, while retaining the normative authority of the convention.

This conference is also a welcomed occasion to update ourselves with the roles of different organizations, engage with one another, create synergies to avoid duplication of efforts and orient ourselves so as to head in the most appropriate direction for addressing the bio-threat.

In view of this, I would take the opportunity to inform all participants about UNICRI's contribution to the common endeavour of the international community to address the threat posed by hazardous biological material and bio-weapons. I would also like to explore areas of collaboration with other organizations and Member States to strengthen this endeavour.

One of the major roles that UNICRI has been playing is to enhance the capabilities of Member States to fulfil their obligations under various Conventions including the Biological Weapons Convention through the "CBRN Centres of Excellence" initiative.

The "Centres of Excellence" on Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear risk mitigation is a European Union initiative that is being implemented jointly by UNICRI and the European Commission Joint Research Centre. Participation to the Centres of Excellence is on voluntary basis. The benefits for countries participating in the initiative include the following:

- reinforcement of national CBRN policy;
- membership of an ever growing network of CBRN experts;
- coordination and integration through the establishment of National CBRN Teams;
- implementation of projects that address specific country needs;
- and, the maximization of existing capacities in the region.

The initiative covers, currently, eight different regions of the world including the African Atlantic Façade; Central Asia; the Middle East; the Gulf Countries, Northern Africa; South East Asia; South East Europe, the Caucasus, Ukraine and Moldova; and Sub-Saharan Africa. In each region a Secretariat will be established to assist partner countries in the assessment of their needs and facilitate the implementation of projects to address these needs.

The initiative foresees, from the beginning of 2012, the implementation of projects on:

first, '*Knowledge development and transfer of best practice on biosafety/bio security and bio-risk management*';

second, '*Knowledge development and transfer of best practice on biological waste management*';

third, '*Guidelines, procedures and standardisation on bio-safety/bio-security*';

fourth, *Sharing experience between EU and South East Asian countries on the reinforcement of legislations and regulations in the field of biosafety and bio-security;*

fifth, *Strengthening laboratory bio-safety and bio-security;*

and sixth, the establishment of an '*International Network of universities and institutes for raising awareness on dual-use concerns in bio-technology*'.

UNICRI has received considerable support from the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit and from many of the countries that are present today and we hope to continue this collaboration also in the future for the implementation of the projects.

I firmly believe that Centres of Excellence Initiative with its unique soft approach can compliment the ongoing efforts of the international community and increase their impact and sustainability.

However, I reiterate that in our enthusiasm to seek enhanced implementation of the Convention we must be cautious and well coordinated so as not to lose the momentum we have gained. This can be ensured only by preventing overlaps and through enhanced cooperation.

Looking towards the future we are entering an era of immense possibilities in synthetic biology and nanobiotechnology. The beneficial use of these technologies in medicine, agriculture, renewable energy, nutrition and environmental protection are extensive and clear. However, development might also cause safety and security risks as, unfortunately, materials and technologies can be used not only for beneficial but also for malicious criminal and terrorist purposes. UNICRI has recently produced a report that documents the results of a pioneering qualitative risk assessment study carried out by UNICRI on the bio-security implications of developments in synthetic biology and nanobiotechnology. This report will not only facilitate international discussion on the issue, but also form the basis for initiating concrete actions to address these emerging threats.

Today's gathering is a reflection of the international community's commitment to address the serious issue of bio-threat and we must make an effort to better synchronize our actions for a more effective and substantial response.

Reiterating UNICRI's full support to the International Community's efforts for addressing bio-threat I wish us all a very successful and a productive conference.