Mr. Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the 2021 BWC Meeting of States Parties.

With the 9th Review Conference rapidly approaching, now is the time for States Parties to look ahead to the next Intersessional Programme (ISP) and identify topics for further discussion. Following the outcome of the 8th Review Conference, the loss of the 2017 Meetings of Experts represented a 25 percent reduction in meeting time dedicated to discussion on technical issues central to the functioning of the BWC. Fortunately, the remainder of this ISP was characterized by spirited debate, positive progress across many issues, and thoughtful proposals, including *The Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Scientists*. These guidelines promote the responsible conduct of research to ensure the broadest use of science for beneficent purposes and stand as a concrete example of the benefits of technical discussion at the Meetings of Experts.

We encourage States Parties to carefully consider the format and content for the next ISP, including refinements to proceedings to make the most efficient use of available time and resources. We also call on States Parties to ensure that the procedural and technical solutions adopted by the BWC to facilitate remote participation during the COVID-19 pandemic continue into the next ISP to promote the input of diverse perspectives from international technical experts, including individuals who cannot attend in person.

States Parties must think critically about topics for inclusion in the next ISP and allocate sufficient time for substantive debate on key areas, including Institutional Strengthening. The current ISP addressed myriad proposals to strengthen the BWC, including many that aim to increase assurance that States Parties are meeting their treaty obligations. Each has its benefits and limitations, and we encourage States Parties to expand the dialogue on these mechanisms and identify appropriate combinations that can provide a more comprehensive perspective on States Parties' activities and meet specific needs of the treaty.

The Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security will host a side event on Tuesday, November 23, in which we will present preliminary findings from our *BWC Assurance* study, including mechanisms and other opportunities to increase certainty in BWC compliance. We would like to
highlight two mechanisms that already exist under the BWC that merit expanded debate in the next ISP. First, Article V consultations provide a tool, delineated explicitly in the treaty text, to alleviate ambiguity and concern. We encourage States Parties to evaluate how to incorporate Article V consultations as a more routine component of BWC proceedings to facilitate increased trust and transparency. Second, we call on States Parties to identify appropriate mechanisms to analyze Confidence-Building Measure (CBM) submissions in order to make effective use of these data. We applaud States Parties for setting a new record for CBM submissions in 2021, but analysis of report content is needed to facilitate increased confidence in States Parties' activities and capabilities.

Thank you again, Mr. Chair and delegates, for the opportunity to address the 2021 Meeting of States Parties. We wish you a very productive meeting.

Very respectfully,

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Director, Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security

The Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security works to protect people from epidemics and disasters and build resilient communities through innovative scholarship, engagement, and research that strengthens the organizations, systems, policies, and programs essential to preventing and responding to public health crises. The Center is part of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and is located in Baltimore, MD.