Statement delivered by Ms. Alison August Treppel, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism of the Organization of American States (CICTE/OAS)

Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the Inter American Committee against Terrorism of the Organization of American States, thank you for inviting me to participate in this Meeting of States Parties of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC).

For more than twenty years, the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (known as CICTE) has worked throughout the Western Hemisphere to prevent and counter terrorism, including through the development and implementation of a number of different legal instruments in this regard. Not only the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention that we are proud to help recognize here today, but also the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism, the first regional and legally binding treaty of its kind that was approved by OAS Member States in 2002.

We are equally focused on supporting development of public policies, on strengthening institutional capacity to address the myriad terrorist threats affecting our region, and on helping to raise greater awareness of the evolving threat landscape.

As regards specifically to non-proliferation, CICTE actively supports implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540. Under the guidance of the 1540 Hemispheric Coordinator, who is housed in CICTE, we support Member States in the drafting of legislation and national 1540 Action Plans; we facilitate practical, hands-on training exercises and peer review exercises among countries of the region to strengthen national and regional CBRN preparedness; and we conduct awareness raising activities to, among other things, increase cooperation and coordination among the public and private sector actors working on these issues.

Today, we are especially focused on addressing biological risk in the Americas. As noted by the 1540 Committee in the final outcome document of the 2016 Comprehensive Review process,
efforts to secure materials related to biological weapons in our region lag far behind those for safeguarding nuclear and chemical weapons.

And, as we all know, an incident involving the introduction and potential spread of a pathogenic biological agent, whether accidentally or maliciously, has the potential to cause significant human, economic, and political harm in any region. The current Covid-19 pandemic has made us all too aware of this.

To address this urgent need, CICTE has launched an ambitious three-year project, generously funded by the European Union, to strengthen biosafety and biosecurity in Latin America in eight key beneficiary states. This initiative is in line with both resolution 1540 and the 2019 European Council Decision to support implementation of the BWC outside of the European Union.

The program has several important objectives. First, the program seeks to harmonize legal frameworks in the region to the degree possible and to ensure compliance with international obligations. Second, it targets capacity building for both policymakers and scientists, through massive online courses as well as through in-person training. And finally, the program seeks to strengthen regional cooperation by organizing peer review activities to promote the exchange of information and good practices among states.

But we know that no single organization, state or region can succeed in preventing and countering WMD proliferation in isolation. So on this and on all projects, we collaborate closely with our regional and global partners, including the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs and the BWC Implementation Support Unit to leverage our collective strengths and coordinate our respective efforts in order to best respond to our Member States.

With that I will close by simply saying that we welcome the opportunity to continue supporting full implementation of the BWC throughout the Western Hemisphere and to working together with all partners to strengthen nonproliferation regimes and contribute to creating a more peaceful and secure world.

Thank you.