Switzerland
2022 Background Information on Implementation of BWC Article X

In line with the requested background information for the Ninth Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction, in particular the request for background information on the implementation of Article X as contained in document BWC/CONF.IX/PC/2, Switzerland submits the following report to States Parties:

Switzerland is fully committed to its obligations under Article X.

Switzerland supports initiatives aimed at enhancing cooperation across sectors in an international setting. In 2016, the Government of Switzerland assisted the Governments of Vietnam and Pakistan through WHO headquarters and the WHO country offices in the elaboration and establishment of national biosafety legislation.

Regarding the outbreak of Ebola in Western Africa between 2013 and 2016, Switzerland supported Doctors without Borders (MSF-Suisse) in its work to combat the Ebola epidemic in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Furthermore, the Swiss Humanitarian Assistance financed various direct actions of the Government of Liberia and sent personnel to the region. Also Spiez Laboratory contributed on site to the fight against the Ebola virus in Western Africa through its active participation in the European Mobile Laboratory (EMLab) project which is linked to WHO’s Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN). Renewed on-site assistance by Spiez Laboratory in support of redressing the sanitary situation in Guinea during the renewed Ebola outbreak of 2021 was coordinated through GOARN and EMLab. To fulfil its tasks, Spiez Laboratory relied on its expertise in quality assurance of specialized laboratories for the analysis and diagnosis of highly pathogenic agents (EQADeBa, QUANDHIP, EMERGE, SHARP) and toxins (EQuATox, EuroBioTox). Spiez Laboratory also takes part in WHO quality assurance exercises for pathogens that are within its area of expertise.

In the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, Spiez Laboratory together with the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH) established a reliable and quality assured diagnostic test in Equatorial Guinea before the first case of Covid-19 was confirmed in the country.

In 2021, Spiez Laboratory became the first facility of the WHO BioHub system, the purpose of which is 1) the timely sharing of biological materials with epidemic or pandemic potential (BMEPP); 2) to facilitate rapid access and analysis of BMEPP to enable risk assessment and development of effective and safe countermeasures including diagnostics, vaccines and therapeutics; and 3) to ensure fair and equitable access to such products by all countries, based on public health needs. Furthermore, Spiez Laboratory is also a trusted laboratory of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Switzerland is an active member of the G7 Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. Swiss efforts particularly focus on the Biological Security Working Group and its Signature Initiative to Mitigate Deliberate Biological Threats in Africa.

Switzerland intends to further its efforts in the field of assistance, in particular in the areas of training and education as well as implementation support.