

***General assembly 1:***

*Topic***:** *The issue of preventing terrorists acquisition and utilization of biological weapons.*

Biological weapons pose a severe and insidious threat to global security. These agents have the potential to inflict devastating harm on populations, economies, and political stability. They exploit natural disease mechanisms to spread harm, making them relatively low-cost but highly effective tools of destruction. Non-state actors and terrorist groups find them particularly appealing due to their difficulty in detection, transport, and trace. This enables covert operations that can disrupt societies and challenge government authority.

Historically, the threat of biological weapons has been evident in incidents like the 2001 anthrax attacks in the United States and the Aum Shinrikyo cult’s attempted use of biological agents in Japan. These incidents underscore the vulnerability of even well-developed nations to bioterrorism.

Today, scientific advancements in fields like synthetic biology and genetic engineering present new challenges. Technologies like CRISPR, while revolutionary in their potential for improving human health, also pose risks of misuse. The dual-use nature of biotechnology amplifies the need for strict regulations, as the same tools that can save lives may also be weaponized by malicious actors.

The international community has made significant strides in addressing the proliferation of biological weapons, with the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) serving as a cornerstone. Established in 1975, the BWC prohibits the development, production, and stockpiling of biological and toxin weapons. However, its effectiveness is limited by the absence of a robust verification mechanism and insufficient enforcement capabilities.

The crux of the matter lies in persuading states to agree on a framework for verification that upholds sovereignty while ensuring accountability. This challenge is compounded by the political dimension of the issue, which touches upon matters of sovereignty, international trust, and resource allocation. Developing countries, for instance, may face difficulties in implementing biosecurity measures due to limited financial and technical resources. Conversely, developed nations might prioritize their own security, potentially overlooking the broader need for global capacity-building. These disparities create vulnerabilities that can be exploited by terrorists, emphasizing the necessity for international solidarity and resource-sharing.

From a geopolitical perspective, the issue also intersects with global power dynamics. Some countries might perceive stricter controls on biotechnology as a means for more powerful nations to maintain their technological dominance. Therefore, fostering trust among nations is paramount to achieving progress. Multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) play pivotal roles in promoting international cooperation, building trust, and strengthening global biosecurity measures.

**Definition of key terms:**
**Biological weapons:** Pathogens (bacteria, viruses, or toxins) or other biological agents used intentionally to cause harm or death to humans, animals, or plants. These weapons exploit natural disease mechanisms to spread illness or death and can be weaponized for military or terrorist purposes.

**Global security:** The protection and stability of countries and international communities from various threats, including military, economic, environmental, and biological dangers. This includes protecting human life, resources, and infrastructure from harm.

**Non-state actors:** Groups or individuals that are not officially affiliated with any government or state. These actors, such as terrorist organizations or criminal groups, can carry out attacks or engage in activities outside of state control, including the use of biological weapons.

**Terrorist groups**: Organized groups that use violence, fear, and intimidation to achieve political, religious, or ideological goals. They may employ unconventional tactics such as bioterrorism to cause mass disruption or casualties.

**Bioterrorism:** The use of biological agents, such as bacteria, viruses, or toxins, to deliberately harm or intimidate populations, typically for political or ideological purposes.

**Anthrax attacks (2001)**: A bioterrorism incident in the United States where anthrax spores were mailed to government officials and media outlets, causing widespread panic and several deaths. This incident highlighted the potential dangers of biological weapons.

**Aum Shinrikyo:** A Japanese doomsday cult responsible for the 1995 sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway. The group also attempted to use biological weapons, demonstrating the potential for non-state actors to use such threats.

**Synthetic biology:** An interdisciplinary field that combines biology, engineering, and biotechnology to design and construct new biological parts, devices, or systems. It has the potential for both beneficial applications and malicious misuse, including the creation of biological weapons.

**Major events:
The Anthrax attacks on the U.S:**The US, Ambassador Toth noted, was struggling to respond to anthrax attacks on its territory. If such a developed country, which had vast supplies of medicine, was having difficulty, one could only feel concern for the rest of the world. One possible way of addressing this concern under the Convention would be to establish international response teams on a standby basis that could be dispatched within 24 hours of an attack to help with the response. While every country could not have medicines and vaccines on hand to cope, working together, an international capability might be possible for the two to three dozen diseases that might be used in biological warfare.

**Aum Shinrikyo’s Biological Weapons Program:**
Aum Shinrikyo, a Japanese doomsday cult, attempted to develop biological weapons in the 1990s. They produced anthrax, botulinum toxin, and other agents in an effort to use them in attacks. Although they were more infamous for their sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995, their biological weapons program was a significant concern.
 **The cold war:**
The Soviet Union had one of the largest and most sophisticated biological weapons programs in history, particularly during the Cold War. The program, known as "Biopreparat," developed numerous deadly pathogens, including anthrax and smallpox. In 1979, an accidental release of anthrax from a facility in Sverdlovsk (now Yekaterinburg) led to several deaths.
 **The Tokyo Subway Sarin Attack:**
Although primarily known for using chemical weapons, the Aum Shinrikyo cult attempted to deploy biological agents as part of its bioterrorism efforts. This attack, which killed 13 people and injured over 1,000, demonstrated the potential risks of biological weapons if the group had succeeded in their plans.

 **Suggested solution:**

**1. Calls For Strengthening International Legal Frameworks By:**

a. Amending the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC):

i. Introduce a verification mechanism to monitor compliance with the treaty.
ii. Establish a reporting system for suspicious biological activities.
iii. Create penalties for violations, enforced through an international tribunal.

b. Expand the scope of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540:

i. Mandate regular assessments of state compliance with biosecurity measures.
ii. Provide technical assistance to member states with weak enforcement capacity.
iii. Include reporting requirements for the export and import of dual-use biological materials.

c. Strengthen regional agreements:

i. Encourage regional biosecurity pacts among neighboring countries.
ii. Develop regional databases for tracking biological materials and expertise.
iii. Establish regional response units for biological emergencies.

**Sources:**<https://www.un.org/disarmament/biological-weapons>

[**https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/1540**](https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/1540)

[**https://emergency.cdc.gov/bioterrorism**](https://emergency.cdc.gov/bioterrorism)