

Forum: 1st committee: Disarmament and International Security

Issue: Threat of Bio-Terrorism after the Covid-19 pandemic

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### Description of Issue:

On several instances, the UN Security Council has directly addressed the threat of weapons of mass destruction as well as chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear terrorism. The novel coronavirus pandemic has reintroduced a threat of bioterrorism. Many countries believe that bioterrorism is a prospective field for terrorist groups. Both the United Nations and the Council of Europe have warned of bioterrorist attacks. Over the past decades, UN Member States have negotiated and adopted a series of international legal instruments to address the risk that non-state actors might develop, acquire and use biological agents or weapons for terrorist purposes.

The last bioterrorist attack was in Tokyo March 20, 1995. During this attack, Aum Shinrikyo used sarin gas in the Tokyo subway system killing 14 people. Since then there have been no other recorded biological terrorist attacks. However the Covid 19 pandemic created more space for new biological attack threats in the now pandemic-free society. The UN must remember not to wait to respond to the consequences of the attacks, but to prevent them from happening in the first place. Guidelines should be introduced to ensure the safety of people, livestock and crops and other agricultural goods.

In response to this global threat, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) developed the Programme on Preventing and Responding to Weapons of Mass Destruction/Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (WMD/CBRN) Terrorism, which aims to improve Member States' and International Organizations' understanding of the level of their threat in relation to terrorism through UN Counter-Terrorism

Centre(UNCCT). On their request, our program assists them with their preventative, preparedness, and response efforts.

### Background information:

The purposeful release of viruses, bacteria, or other germs that can sicken or kill people, cattle, or crops is known as a biological attack, or bioterrorism. One of the most likely agents to be employed in a biological attack is *Bacillus anthracis*, the bacteria that causes anthrax. In comparison to other types of weapons of mass destruction, biological weapons have the following characteristics: secrecy and duration of action; the ability to use multiple biological agents at the same time, including those with altered biological properties; the potential for the spread of emerging diseases over large areas; and the length and complexity of the identification process. Furthermore, because the many technical structures into which biological agents can infiltrate are not destroyed, the effect's selectivity - either people, animals, or plants, or their numerous combinations - can be affected. Biological weapons are said to be one of the cheapest sorts of weapons that may be made even in primitive conditions (in the kitchen in pots, pans). The last circumstance is being questioned: your microbial mass manufacturing. The treatment of anthracis for military purposes is a complicated, time-consuming, and expensive procedure. Special nutritional media with the inclusion of specific metabolites and microelements are required in particular. The method of immersed cultivation is used to receive microbial mass in fermenters (including bioreactors, chemostats, and continuous flow systems). The sporulation process then takes place on particular nutritional media under certain, well-defined physicochemical conditions.

Biological warfare was widely utilized in the twentieth century, and it now has the potential to be used as a terror weapon by an aggressive non-government organization in the modern era. Biological weapons were developed by all major powers throughout the two world wars, but only Japan employed them in combat.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the plague pandemic, commonly known as the Black Death, raced through Europe, the Near East, and North Africa, and was perhaps the most catastrophic public health disaster in recorded history. The exact source of the plague is unknown; numerous locations in the Far East, including China, Mongolia, India and Central Asia, have been suggested. Significant evidence reveals that Germany had a large-scale biological warfare program during World War I. This program was said to have included covert operations.

During World War I, there were rumors of Germans attempting to export disease-producing germs such as *Bacillus anthracis* (anthrax) and *Pseudomonas pseudomallei* (glanders) to the United States and other countries. Infected Romanian sheep destined for export to Russia were infected with the same agents. Following that, there were reports that Germany was attempting to transmit cholera in Italy and plague in St. Petersburg, Russia. All of these charges were refuted by Germany, including the claim that biological bombs were dropped over British positions.

The issue of bio-terrorist attacks can be solved only with collaboration of all countries

### Key terms:

Anthrax - *Bacillus anthracis*, a gram-positive rod-shaped bacteria that causes a terrible infectious disease.

Mustard gas - contact with the gas can cause blistering of the skin. Sulfur mustard was introduced in World War I as a chemical warfare agent. Historically it was available for use in the treatment of a skin condition called psoriasis.

Sarin and sarin gas - a human-made chemical warfare agent classified as a nerve agent. Sarin originally was developed in 1938 in Germany as a pesticide. Sarin is a clear, colorless, and tasteless liquid that has no odor in its pure form. However, sarin can evaporate into a vapor (gas) and spread into the environment.

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) - Biological Weapons Convention, is a disarmament treaty that effectively bans biological and toxin weapons by prohibiting their development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use.

### Links:

<https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Terrorism/Bioterrorism>

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

[https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/terrorism/latest-news/2020\\_international-legal-framework-against-biological-terrorism.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/terrorism/latest-news/2020_international-legal-framework-against-biological-terrorism.html)

<https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-19745045>