



## **Conference Statement**

### **Biosafety and Biosecurity International Conference 2011 (BBIC-2011)**

15 September 2011  
El Hassan Science City, Amman

Today, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Biosafety and Biosecurity International Conference concluded its work in Amman. The Conference was held at El Hassan Science City under the patronage of HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal. The conference comprised some 130 participants from 23 countries. It heard reports of major progress in promoting healthier and more secure communities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and agreed upon a plan of action for improving the region's preparedness and ability to respond to biological risks.

The Biosafety and Biosecurity International Conference (BBIC-2011) "*Healthier and More Secure Communities in the Middle East and North African Region*" was co-hosted by El Hassan Science City Jordan and the International Council for the Life Sciences. It built upon the work of the very successful BBIC-2007 and BBIC-2009 Conferences held in Abu Dhabi and Casablanca. It also built upon the considerable progress made by countries of the region in implementing elements of biosafety and biosecurity strategies identified as priorities at these conferences.

The conference was opened by His Royal Highness Prince Hassan bin Talal and hosted by Her Royal Highness Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan, in her role as Founder of El Hassan Science City. HRH Princess Sumaya paid tribute to the BBIC Process and prevailed upon the participants to continue their efforts to realise the vision of safer and responsible science. HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal delivered an important speech on the need to protect and promote human dignity and security.

The experts discussed the further development of biosafety and biosecurity strategies in the MENA region, with particular emphasis on the development of capacity in the region, and the establishment of national and regional biosafety associations. In particular, the participants discussed appropriate strategies and technologies for addressing the region's specific biosafety and biosecurity needs. Specific action was recommended to develop a culture of leadership in biosafety and biosecurity and to strength national and regional networks.

As a result of this conference, it has been agreed to:

- Continue with work to implement the Framework Document "Developing National and Regional Biosafety and Biosecurity Strategies in the Middle East and North Africa", adopted at Casablanca in 2009, as the road map for the region's efforts to develop such strategies under the authority of the BBIC Steering Committee. Participants gratefully acknowledged that funding has been generously made available for these core activities;

- Develop the plan of action for working groups of experts in appropriate fields to address technical issues relating to the creation of these strategies;
- Develop, where practicable, national and sub-regional activities to implement the Framework Document;
- Continue efforts to establish Regional Biosafety and Biosecurity Training Centres in the MENA region;
- Encourage capacity building to meet the requirements of IHR (2005) with regard to epidemiological surveillance for infectious diseases;
- Continue work to create, expand and sustain national biosafety associations in the MENA region and coordination and cooperation between them jointly, severally and with the International Federation of Biosafety Associations (IFBA).
- Hold a fourth Biosafety and Biosecurity International Conference in 2013.

Specific immediate actions were initiated:

- To hold a joint biosafety and biosecurity training session for the Middle East Consortium on Infectious Disease Surveillance in November 2011;
- To hold another meeting on the Responsible Conduct of Science in November 2011 in Pakistan;
- To hold another joint biosafety and biosecurity training session for a further four countries in the MENA region in early 2012;
- To hold the next meeting of the BBIC Steering Committee in December 2011;
- To engage governments of the region and regional organisations such as the Arab League to gain their support for and commitment to the BBIC Process.

The participants of the Amman Conference reiterated their strong support for continuing the Biosafety and Biosecurity International Conference Process. Generous offers were received to host the next conference in the series in 2013 and these offers will be pursued by the Steering Committee. The conference appealed to regional and international governments and organisations to provide financial, technical and political support for the BBIC Process.

The participants also agreed to send a message to the Biological Weapons Convention Seventh Review Conference in Geneva in December 2011 bringing to its attention the contribution that the BBIC Process makes towards biosecurity in the region and the value of the Process in ensuring the promulgation *inter alia* of the values of the Convention to the institutional and personal level of those involved in the life sciences in the MENA region. They also urged other regions to draw on the BBIC Process as a possible model to respond to their respective priorities to enable safer management of biological risks, be they natural, accidental or intentional.

The participants thanked their Royal Highnesses Prince El Hassan bin Talal and Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan for their patronage, and El Hassan Science City for hosting the conference and the Royal Scientific Society and the International Council for the Life Sciences for organising it. In addition, they thanked those whose financial contributions and sponsorship made the conference possible, particularly the Skoll Global Threats Fund, the Global Partnership Programme of Canada, the Foundation for Environmental Security and Sustainability and the Elizabeth R Griffin Research Foundation.