Email: iap@twas.org
secretariat@iapartnership.org
Twitter: @IAPartnership
Website: www.interacademies.org

SCIENCE HEALTH POLICY

the interacademy partnership

IAP Statement on Biosecurity

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In recent decades scientific research has created new and unexpected knowledge and technologies that offer unprecedented opportunities to improve human and animal health and environmental conditions. But some science and technology can be used for destructive purposes as well as for constructive purposes. Scientists have a special responsibility when it comes to problems of "dual use" and the misuse of science and technology.

The 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention reinforced the international norm prohibiting biological weapons, stating in its provisions that "each state party to this Convention undertakes never in any circumstances to develop, produce, stockpile or otherwise acquire or retain: microbial or other biological agents, or toxins whatever their origin or method of production, of types and in quantities that have no justification for prophylactic or other peaceful purposes." Nevertheless, the threat from biological weapons is again a live issue. This statement presents principles to guide individual scientists and local scientific communities that may wish to define a code of conduct for their own use.

These principles represent fundamental issues that should be taken into account when formulating codes of conduct. They are not intended to be a comprehensive list of considerations.

1. **Awareness**. Scientists have an obligation to do no harm. They should always take into consideration the reasonably foreseeable consequences of their own activities. They should therefore:

   •always bear in mind the potential consequences – possibly harmful – of their research and recognize that individual good conscience does not justify ignoring the possible misuse of their scientific endeavour;

   •refuse to undertake research that has only harmful consequences for humankind.

2. **Safety and Security**. Scientists working with agents such as pathogenic organisms or dangerous toxins have a responsibility to use good, safe and secure laboratory procedures, whether codified by law or common practice .

3. **Education and Information**. Scientists should be aware of, disseminate information about and teach national and international laws and regulations, as well as policies and principles aimed at preventing the misuse of biological research.

4. **Accountability**. Scientists who become aware of activities that violate the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention or international customary law should raise their concerns with appropriate people, authorities and agencies.

5. **Oversight**. Scientists with responsibility for

oversight of research or for evaluation of projects or publications should promote adherence to these principles by those under their control, supervision or evaluation and act as role models in this regard.

These principles have been endorsed by the following national academies of science, working through the InterAcademy Panel:

Albanian Academy of Sciences
National Academy of Exact, Physical and Natural Sciences, Argentina
The National Academy of Sciences of Armenia
Australian Academy of Science
Austrian Academy of Sciences
Bangladesh Academy of Sciences
National Academy of Sciences of Belarus
The Royal Academies for Science and the Arts of Belgium
Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Brazilian Academy of Sciences
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
Cameroon Academy of Sciences
The Royal Society of Canada
Chinese Academy of Sciences
Academia Sinica, China Taiwan
Colombian Academy of Exact, Physical and Natural Sciences
Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences
Cuban Academy of Sciences
Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic
Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters
Academy of Scientific Research and Technology, Egypt
Estonian Academy of Sciences
The Delegation of the Finnish Academies of Science and Letters
Académie des Sciences, France
Union of German Academies of Sciences and Humanities
Academy of Athens, Greece
Hungarian Academy of Sciences
Indian National Science Academy
Indonesian Academy of Sciences
Royal Irish Academy
Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities
Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Italy
Science Council of Japan
African Academy of Sciences
Kenya National Academy of Sciences
The National Academy of Sciences, The Republic of Korea
National Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic
Latvian Academy of Sciences
Lithuanian Academy of Sciences
Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts Akademi Sains Malaysia
Academia Mexicana de Ciencias
Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco
The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences
Academy Council of the Royal Society of New Zealand
Nigerian Academy of Sciences
Pakistan Academy of Sciences
Palestine Academy for Science and Technology
Academia Nacional de Ciencias del Peru
National Academy of Science and Technology, Philippines
Polska Akademia Nauk, Poland
Russian Academy of Sciences
Académie des Sciences et Techniques du Sénégal
Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts
Singapore National Academy of Sciences
Slovak Academy of Sciences
Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts
Academy of Science of South Africa
Royal Academy of Exact, Physical and Natural Sciences of Spain
Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences
Council of the Swiss Scientific Academies
Turkish Academy of Sciences
The Uganda National Academy of Sciences
The Royal Society, UK
US National Academy of Sciences
Academia de Ciencias Físicas, Matemáticas y Naturales de Venezuela
Zimbabwe Academy of Sciences
TWAS, the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World

IAP Science and **IAP Health Secretariat**: ICTP Campus, c/o TWAS, Strada Costiera 11, 34151 Trieste, Italy. Email: iap@twas.org
IAP Policy Secretariat: c/o The U.S. NASEM, 500 Fifth St. NW, Washington, DC 20001, United States. Email: secretariat@iapartnership.org
Twitter: @IAPartnership
Website: www.interacademies.org