



**Third edition of the Biosecurity Diplomacy Workshop
for Young Scientists from the Global South**

**Transcript of video message by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu
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Virtual Briefing
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Excellencies,

Your Excellency, Ambassador Knudsen, [Head of EU Delegation in Geneva]

Dear Young Scientists,
Distinguished panelists,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, I would like to welcome you to the third edition of the biosecurity diplomacy workshop for young scientists from the Global South.

Allow me first to congratulate the 2022 cohort of young scientists selected for this workshop. I have no doubt that your insights can contribute to our shared goal of a world free of biological weapons. I am particularly delighted to see such a geographically and gender balanced group. Inclusivity and diversity underpin global security and are key to sustainable outcomes that benefit all.

I would like to express my appreciation to the European Union for sponsoring this event and for supporting space for young people to contribute to today's disarmament challenges. At UNODA, we firmly believe that what Secretary-General Guterres calls a "networked and inclusive multilateralism" depends on how well we include and empower youth.

In 2021, the Youth for Biosecurity Initiative has developed into an active network bringing youth voices into biological security discussions. As you join this network, the Biological Weapons Convention is at an important crossroads. Two intersecting developments make the strengthening of the biosecurity regime critical.

First, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that diseases can cross borders, spread rapidly around the world and cause devastating social, political and economic harm.

A disease deliberately engineered to spread more rapidly and cause more death would imply a greater threat yet. This is why all possible measures must be taken to prevent future pandemics, including the deliberate use of disease as a weapon.

Second, advances in biological science and technology are occurring at an unprecedented and increasing pace. While holding many benefits for humanity, life sciences are often dual-use and can cause harm if misused. The BWC community needs to consider such developments as they may enable the acquisition and use of biological weapons.

The upcoming Ninth BWC Review Conference will provide an opportunity for its States Parties to strengthen the norm against the misuse of biological agents and toxins under the Convention, but your voices can also make a difference.

Allow me to give you a few examples of how youth can bring about positive change.

First, youth can raise awareness of issues that will impact their future. Urgent challenges such as the prevention of future pandemics or scientific advances in the life sciences produce a generational impact that leads younger generations to advance bolder solutions. I welcome the adoption of the Youth Declaration for Biosecurity in 2021. I encourage you to join this collective call-to-action from previous cohorts and other youth networks.

Second, young people make up an important part of biosecurity practitioners in universities, laboratories or industries. Such ground-level perspectives can help policymakers understand the reality in the field and build new biosecurity frameworks.

Third, youth “fluency” with emerging technologies can help find solutions to current biosecurity policy issues by bringing new perspectives to old issues and looking at them through fresh eyes.

And finally, international youth networks can improve international cooperation on global threats. New and lasting ties among young scientists who are involved in multilateral diplomacy tend to improve collaboration and mutual understanding.

By placing youth engagement and empowerment at the core of its activities, UNODA aims to support the Secretary-General’s recommendation to improve youth access to capacity-building while providing space for their participation. The workshop on which you are about to embark seeks to empower your generation to take transformative roles in global biosecurity. With the knowledge and relationships that you will build, I hope you will be better equipped to enhance global biological security through concrete actions.

I wish you an enriching, informative and interactive workshop and I look forward to hearing your ideas.