

## Opening of the 2nd OIE Global Conference on Biological Threat Reduction *[online version]*

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### Enhancing Health and Security for all

*'Enhancing Health and Security for all'* – this is the theme of the World Organisation for Animal Health global conference that opens this Tuesday, 31 October, in Ottawa (Canada). The aim of the conference is to increase awareness among the international community of the need to reduce biological threats at all levels. For three days, it will explore ways of strengthening connections between the relevant sectors and improving international cooperation in matters of biological threat reduction.



**Ottawa, 31 October 2017** – The 2nd OIE Global Conference on Biological Threat Reduction was opened this morning by Dr Botlhe Michael Modisane, President of the OIE, and Mr Mark Gwozdecky, Assistant Deputy Minister for International Security and Political Affairs in Canada.

Humans and animals have always been affected by infectious diseases and biological toxins. Infections and cases of poisoning usually occur naturally; however, biological agents can also be used to cause deliberate harm. The manipulation of infectious agents is essential for research, as it is needed to develop new diagnostic methods and produce better-performing vaccines, but this work carries the intrinsic risk of accidentally disseminating dangerous substances or having other unintended negative consequences.

The most effective and long-lasting method of protecting ourselves against the threat of the deliberate or accidental dissemination of pathogenic agents of animal origin is to strengthen the capacity of human and animal health systems to prevent, detect and respond to all biological threats, be they deliberate, natural or accidental with a particular focus on controlling the animal sources of diseases that are transmissible to humans.

Following the [recommendations](#) developed at the **1st OIE Global Conference** on Biological Threat Reduction in June 2015, which was held in Paris (France), this **latest conference aims to encourage and strengthen links between the animal-health, human-health and public-security sectors** in matters related to biological threat reduction strategies. It also aims to **foster effective cross-sector collaboration to prevent, prepare for, and respond to these threats.**

The recommendations on the way forward – which will take advantage of cutting-edge scientific knowledge while minimising and mitigating the dangers – will be developed together with conference participants.

**The following issues will be the focus over the three days:**

- Current trends in non-proliferation tools and initiatives on global security
- Discussions at the global level on the use of technology
- Systems evaluation, and investment in collaborative activities that promote disaster preparedness
- The future of biological threat reduction

*“This Conference is your chance to learn, but more importantly to contribute to our common knowledge, to participate in jointly developing recommendations for a way forward, using the best of science to our advantage while minimizing and mitigating the risks.*

*[...] Use this opportunity to exchange views, ask questions and address challenges that are as diverse as we are as a Global Community. As per the motto of this conference, we are here for “enhancing health and security for all.”* said Dr Modisane, President of the OIE, during his opening speech.

*“Naturally occurring disease and bioterrorism threaten us all”,* added Mr. Mark Gwozdecky, Assistant Deputy Minister of International Security and Political Affairs in Canada. *“Only concerted and coordinated action by stakeholders from around the world and across many sectors will lead to effective reduction of the biological threats we all face.”*

This second conference will gather nearly 350 participants, notably relevant international organisations, national Delegates of OIE Member Countries, renowned scientific experts, donors, representatives from security organisations, and stakeholders working in animal production, animal trade, animal health and welfare, and public health.



**You can follow the Conference discussions on Twitter:**

## **#OIEbiothreat2017**

Some of the sessions and interviews will be rebroadcast on our [YouTube](#) channel, and the official photos of the event will be available on [Flickr](#).

For further information, go to the [media page](#) for this event, which will be updated throughout the conference.

The conference programme can be consulted on the conference [website](#).

### **The OIE's involvement in biological threat reduction issues**

As the OIE mandate is to improve animal health, veterinary public health and animal welfare throughout the world, the threat posed by the accidental or deliberate dissemination of pathogenic agents of animal origin is an issue that the OIE takes very seriously.

To respond to these challenges, the OIE developed its first biological threat reduction strategy in 2012, with a revised version in 2015. The strategy has a very specific vision: *'A world that is safe and secure from the accidental or deliberate release of animal pathogens, including zoonoses'*.

This strategy addresses five key areas:

- Maintaining scientific expertise and setting standards and guidelines
- Good governance, capacity building and implementation of the One Health concept
- Global disease intelligence and updates on the latest methods of disease prevention and control
- International cooperation and solidarity between countries
- Advocacy and communication

This strategy is consistent with the [OIE's Sixth Strategic Plan](#) (2016–2020) (adopted in May 2015 by the World Assembly of OIE Delegates) and cuts across all the plan's objectives.

### **For more information:**

- [Fact sheet on biological threat reduction](#)
- [OIE Biological Threat Reduction Strategy](#)
- [Website of the 2nd OIE Global Conference on Biological Threat Reduction](#)