

CONCEPT PAPER

ASEAN Regional Forum Workshop on Building Capacities on Laboratory Biosafety and Biosecurity

Proposal

The United States proposes holding a workshop on “Preventing Bioterrorism: Laboratory Biosafety and Biosecurity in the ASEAN Regional Forum,” to be held in Fall 2008 or Spring 2009. This workshop would promote capacity building and regional projects on laboratory biosafety and biosecurity in the ARF region.

Background

The anthrax attacks of 2001 in the U.S. and the outbreaks of SARS and highly pathogenic avian influenza have demonstrated that infectious disease—whether natural or deliberately delivered—poses a significant and growing threat to international peace, security and stability. One important trend influencing the biological threat is the expansion of public and private biological and life sciences worldwide. Advancing biotechnology is critical to improve the health and well being of millions globally, but also increases the risk that biological and life sciences could be misused. It is important to address these critical issues together through international collaborations and threat awareness.

Today, the world is faced with the daunting challenge of protecting against accidental release of dangerous biological agents and from exploitation by those who wish to commit bioterrorism. The international community must also strengthen its ability to detect and respond to highly infectious disease outbreaks that threaten human and agricultural health. The ARF can play an important role in meeting this challenge.

In order to seek a cooperative approach with the ARF to address these serious challenges, the United States proposes, as a Confidence Building Measure, a Workshop on Laboratory Biosafety and Biosecurity, to be held in the Fall of 2008/Spring of 2009.

The objectives of this seminar will be to foster exchange and the sharing of national experiences in efforts to improve the security of bioscience infrastructure within the ARF region and beyond. Such national experiences include:

- Raising awareness of biological threats globally;
- Strengthening laboratory biosafety and biosecurity to protect lab capacity and safely combat infectious diseases;
- Expanding the use of safe, modern diagnostics; and
- Developing emergency laboratory response, recovery and mitigation plans for biological events.

Representation by critical international health and law enforcement entities, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), Interpol, regional professional associations and others as appropriate would also be solicited.

Workshop Objectives/Topics

1. Acknowledging the need for cooperation within the ARF to address laboratory biosafety and biosecurity challenges, including:
 - Risk assessment and risk awareness to determine priorities for laboratory biosafety and biosecurity and donor assistance;
 - Providing assistance to countries to develop appropriate laboratory capacity to meet their public health and research needs and to safeguard and secure facilities housing dangerous biological materials;
 - Implementing best practices for laboratory biosafety and biosecurity, biorisk management, disease surveillance, and safe diagnostic practices;
 - Establishing appropriate laboratory biosafety and biosecurity guidelines at the national and regional levels, which builds upon the foundation of WHO's "Biosafety Manual" and its "Laboratory Biosecurity Guidance" or equivalent internationally developed guidelines; and
 - Development of training for laboratory bio-risk mitigation and law enforcement investigations involving facilities housing dangerous biological materials
2. Providing an exchange of national experiences and priorities in laboratory biosafety and biosecurity to harmonize best practices; and
3. Facilitating of donor coordination for states in need of assistance to improve laboratory biosafety and biosecurity.

Language, Venue, Date, Duration

Language: English

Location: TBD

Date: Fall 2008 or Spring 2009

Duration: 2 days

Participants

We encourage all ARF participant states to send representatives at the working level from agencies responsible for ensuring safety and security at bioscience facilities, and for responding to laboratory biosafety and biosecurity threats domestically or abroad, as appropriate.

Administrative Arrangements

The international travel, accommodations and other related costs necessary for participation will be borne by the participants. The United States, and any co-chairs which have yet to be determined, will bear the administrative costs of the seminar.