

**Statement by Dr. Bobadoye Ayodotun, Chief Operating Officer Global
Emerging Pathogens Treatment Consortium (GET) at the Open
Consultations on the Comprehensive Review of the implementation of the
United Nations Resolution 1540, UN Headquarters New York 31st May to
2nd June 2022.**

Thank you Mr. Chairman for giving my organization the opportunity to speak. It is an honour to have the opportunity to make this presentation. I am making this presentation on behalf of the Global Emerging Pathogens Treatment Consortium (GET). GET is a Pan-African consortium of experts from different fields. It was established in 2014 in Nigeria as a direct response to the 2014-2015 Ebola virus disease outbreaks in West Africa and the need to create an African-led multidisciplinary forum of experts capable of working together to strengthen Africa's preparedness and resilience in tackling emerging biosecurity threats.

Mr. Chairman, The vast majority of Africa countries have reported that they do not possess any weapon of mass destruction (WMD) nor do they intend to acquire any. However, that does not mean that Africa is exempted from all related issues in the terms of Resolution 1540, such as technologies and materials that could be used for WMD related purposes. Africa has experienced increase in the frequency and intensity of emerging infectious disease outbreaks in recent decades. About 22 reported outbreaks of Ebolavirus disease have been reported since 1976 in Sub-Saharan Africa with the 2014-2016 outbreaks in West Africa being the deadliest with about 29,000 infections and 11,000 mortalities reported.

The increase in frequency and impact of infectious disease outbreaks coupled with increased investment in research on biological and living materials which has led to significant increase in the number of diagnostic and molecular Laboratories in Africa and compounded by the possibility of non states actors deliberately using biological agents as WMD has necessitated the development of specific biosecurity measures to prevent biological agents from being diverted for proliferation purposes.

Mr Chairman, As a consortium of experts operating in the biosecurity space in Africa, we recognize the contributions of Laboratories in controlling infectious diseases outbreaks. However, there are also some biosecurity concerns we want to bring to your attention:

- (1) Research activities in Laboratories in Africa needs adequate monitoring. Standard practices of Laboratories identify research concepts such as ‘dual use of biospecimen-where one and the same piece of scientific research sometimes has the potential to be used for harm as well as for good. Effective biosecurity measures are needed to ensure safety of biological materials in the Laboratories to prevent deliberate or unintentional release of dangerous pathogens to the environment.
- (2) Samples both biospecimen and waste generated from the Laboratory needs clear regulations on utilization, storage, and disposal. For example, because of the Ebola outbreak of 2014-2016, the West African region had an estimated 300,000 Ebola related samples generated during the two-year outbreak. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has also generated thousands of SARS-CoV-2 related samples.

Lack of proper storage and accountability for these biological samples creates a global biosecurity issue of grave concern.

The GET Consortium believes that the following measures are important to prevent proliferation of biological materials as Weapon of Mass Destruction in Africa:

1. Development and implementation of national governance structures that will enforce, regulate, and promote biosecurity and responsible conduct in life science research in African countries
2. Enforcement of established laws, policies, and regulations that governs biosafety and biosecurity in research Laboratories in Africa
3. Increase and continuous training and capacity building of laboratory personnel on ethics, biosafety, and biosecurity concept.
4. Coordinated collaboration and communication among relevant international, regional and national organizations to strengthen monitoring of research activities to ensure they adhere with agreed international standards.

Finally, we recognize some challenges faced by African countries in implementing the Resolution 1540 which include limited resources, limited capacity to formulate and implement effective policies and the need for continuous advocacy on the continent. Some activities carried out by GET to address some of these challenges include

1. The GET consortium and United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs UNODA jointly organized a side event during the Joint virtual

event on the margins of the annual meeting of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention on 21st November 2021.

2. GET consortium coordinated the development of the West Africa biosecurity policy for the West Africa Health Organization (WAHO)
3. We are continuously embarking on biosecurity and biosafety capacity building in west African countries.
4. GET consortium organizes the annual conference on One Health and Biosecurity, and also publish the GET journal of Biosecurity and One Health.

Thank you for your attention.

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