

Dipartimento: Medicina di Laboratorio  
Struttura Complessa: SC Microbiologia Clinica,  
Virologia e Diagnostica Bioemergenze  
*Direttore: Prof. Maria Rita Gismondo*  
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**STATEMENT by Francesca Cerutti on behalf of PROF. MARIA RITA GISMONDO  
BSL 4 Laboratory of Microbiology, Virology and Biomergencies at Luigi Sacco  
University Hospital**

Mr Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Excellencies and Distinguished Representatives,  
It is a great honour to be invited to contribute to the Meeting of Experts of the States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. My name is Francesca Cerutti and I am speaking today from the Laboratory of Microbiology, Virology and Biomergency at Luigi Sacco University Hospital in Milan, BSL4 facility.

“Luigi Sacco” University Hospital is a teaching hospital recognized as a national centre of clinical excellence in specific areas including infectious diseases, clinical microbiology and pharmacology. High technological infrastructures in the clinical departments (all major specializations are covered) guarantee multidisciplinary expertise and facilities at the forefront of modern biomedical research. Indeed the hospital is a centre for high-quality university teaching both at the graduate, doctoral and post-doctoral level with the University of Milan. The University of Milan is a public teaching and research university and one among the 21 members of LERU (the League of European Research Universities).

I will now briefly mention some of the many activities performed by our institution in the framework of its commitment to the implementation of Article X.

Our institution, with its team of doctors, technicians and attendants continues establishing and improving national and regional capabilities to survey, detect, diagnose and combat infectious diseases by conducting forefront research in the field of bacteriology, mycology, and parasitology, as well as in the most innovative field of molecular biology and the rapid diagnosis of bacterial cultures, viral infections (especially HIV and hepatitis), mycobacterial infections, (tuberculosis and other mycobacterial), nosocomial infections and emerging infectious diseases. Part of the staff is specialized in the control of antibiotic resistance (for bacteria and mycobacteria) and antiretroviral therapy (HIV) using the latest technology and equipment.

Since these diseases also are of immediate public health concern, most of the work is reported in open scientific literature, it is presented at scientific conferences and it is highly publicized.

In the framework of implementation of Article X, Luigi Sacco University Hospital also takes a leading action in supporting capacity-building in states parties to the BWC which may require assistance, with due consideration for the specific needs of the developing countries.

The most immediate form of such cooperation are bilateral/multilateral collaborations settled with partner countries in order to provide training, workshops, seminars, hands-on courses tailored to local needs (assessed through field missions and gap analysis). Teaching activities are conducted through e-learning modules as well as through in-presence courses that may last from few days up to several months. Major topics involve bio-threats analysis, biosafety, biosecurity, biorisk assessment and biohazardous waste management. Educational Materials are produced making constant reference to WHO and other international recognised guidelines in order to enhance the standardisation of best practices and operational measures.

At the moment Luigi Sacco University hospital is involved in many international partnerships and projects implemented both as manager and as technical body. These collaborations are all aimed at promoting

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sustainable and transferable knowledge through innovative form of multidisciplinary tutoring and at improving coordination and preparedness at national, regional and international level.

And now I would like to present some recent examples of *International Trainings, Missions and Workshops carried out by our institution.*

- The Master Euro-African: Biosécurité et Biosûreté

The Laboratory will directly contribute, with other European partners, to the Master Euro-African: Biosécurité et Biosûreté at the University Mohammed V of Rabat. In the framework of this collaboration, we will offer our facilities and staff to host groups of students as interns; produce e-learning materials to integrate taught lectures; and actively participate to the organisation of seminars.

- Biorisk Assessment Mission, Tblisi

Furthermore, for many years, a productive collaboration with the Association of Biosafety and Biosecurity in Georgia has also been active. We already hosted experts at our training events. And we are now preparing an extensive training program, which began with an exploratory mission last June to assess local needs.

- CBRN CoE Initiative

Since the very beginning of the CBRN Center Of Excellence Initiative, the Laboratory played a crucial role and contributed to the development of projects on the basis of the rich assessment of South East Asia state-of-the-art conducted in the framework of Pilot Project n.253485 - titled "Sharing experience between EU and South East Asian countries on the reinforcement of legislations and regulations in the field of biosafety and biosecurity, as well as relevant laboratories management systems through Regional Centre of Excellence".

At present, our team is working on the implementation of five COE projects (P3, P6, P7, P13 and P18), most of which share a strong educational component and are based on "train the trainer methodologies". Altogether these projects cover a wide and varied range of countries and geographical areas including South East Asia, South East Europe, the Caucasus, Moldova and Ukraine, African Atlantic Façade, North Africa.

Project 3 - Knowledge development and transfer of best practice on bio-safety/bio-security/bio-risk management.

Beneficiary Countries and geographical zone: South East Asia, South East Europe, the Caucasus, Moldova and Ukraine, African Atlantic Façade, North Africa

Project 6 - Knowledge development and transfer of best practice on chemical and biological waste management.

Beneficiary Countries and geographical zone: South East Asia

Project 7- Guidelines, procedures and standardisation on bio-safety/bio-security.

Beneficiary Countries and geographical zone: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Laos, The Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia

Project 13 - Capacity building and raising awareness for identifying and responding to threats from

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chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials in Sub Saharan African countries.  
Beneficiary Countries and geographical zone: Sub-Saharan Africa

Project 18 - International Network of universities and institutes for raising awareness on dual-use concerns in bio-technology.

Beneficiary Countries and geographical zone: International

- Luigi Sacco University is also partner of the consortium linked to the EU Instrument of Stability LOT.1 on Risk Mitigation together with other relevant european research centers.

Finally the Laboratory is constantly engaged in supporting and strengthening existing international networks of stakeholders working on infectious diseases and public health security, in particular those of the WHO, FAO, OIE, BTWC-ISU, INTERPOL, CDC inter alia improving communication on disease surveillance at all levels.

The head of the Laboratory, Professor Gismondo is also president of an international committee who annually organizes and chairs the International conference “Biosecurity and Biosafety: future trends and solutions” which is supported by Italian Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence and by different international biosafety associations like EBSA, IFBA, etc..

The symposium gathers leading experts in the field and has become a unique platform to discuss about new tools, new trends and new implementation opportunities on biosafety and biosecurity with the aim of supporting synergies among scientific communities.

In conclusion, we often hear that diseases know no borders. And recent events confirm such assumption. We believe that only through a reinforced and prolonged cooperation together with a continuous and deep sharing of experiences among states, institutions and scientists sustainable results can be achieved. Thank you for your attention.