

Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) Workshop
Regional African Parliamentary Workshop to Promote Biological Security
HOM DSLAM Opening Remarks
8-10 May 2022

- Honourable Guests, dear diplomatic colleagues, ladies and gentlemen: Habari za asubuhi!
- On behalf of the Government of Canada, it is my pleasure to join you today at this Regional African Parliamentary Workshop to Promote Biological Security.
- Let me begin by expressing my sincere thanks to all of you for coming. We are particularly pleased to be joined by so many distinguished Members of Parliament and Government Officials from **twelve (TBC)** African countries.
- Nous sommes ravis à vous voir ici aujourd'hui. Bienvenu à tous et merci à tous d'avoir pris le temps de vous occuper de votre horaire chargé pour attirer votre attention sur cette importante initiative.
- Thank you as well to the Parliament of Tanzania and Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) for organizing this important event.
- As the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic makes abundantly clear, an increased focus on strengthening global biological security is long overdue. For too long, too many have paid too little attention to the potential for infectious diseases to disrupt and destabilise our inter-connected world, citing the rarity and relatively modest impact of pandemics over the past century to downplay the potential for a truly devastating global disease event
- The pandemic has underscored that more collective work is needed to build capacity to prevent, detect and respond to all manner of infectious disease threats, whether natural, accidental or deliberate in origin.
- To accomplish this ambitious objective, Canada is a leading advocate of efforts to build a strong global partnership at the “health-security interface”, where the interests and activities of two very different sectors intersect and align. Such cooperation is rooted in the mutual recognition that though the motivations may be very different – combatting natural disease versus preventing or detecting deliberate biological attacks – the capacities required to accomplish both health and security objectives are the same.
- For nearly two decades, Canada’s Weapons Threat Reduction Program has been delivering concrete health-security capacity building programming to mitigate biological threats as part of our contribution to the G7-led Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction.
- Canada’s continued commitment to strengthening biosecurity and building health security capacities in Africa is reflected in its leadership of the Global Partnership’s Signature Initiative to Mitigate Biological Threats in Africa, which is being implemented in the closest collaboration with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and other African partners.

- The goal of the Signature Initiative is to reduce bio-threats through the collective activities of the Global Partnership and African countries working towards the same goals.
- In close consultation with Africa CDC and other external stakeholders, four inter-connected priority areas have been identified for collective action through the Signature Initiative: i) biosafety and biosecurity; ii) national frameworks; iii) surveillance and epidemic intelligence; and iv) non-proliferation.
- Critical to the success of the Signature Initiative will be strong Africa leadership. In this regard, I am pleased to say that we are in very good hands based on the level of participation in this workshop.
- Speaking directly to the Parliamentarians in attendance – you represent a key constituency in the global campaign to strengthen biological security, including by deciding whether, when and what resources will be devoted by your countries to support the full and effective implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and UNSCR 1540.
- Your role as Legislators and Parliamentarians is also critical to the development of strong national legislation.
- We recognise the task of strengthening biological security can be daunting. In this regard, rest assured that Canada will do its part to assist you.
- We look forward to building on the outcomes of this workshop and PGA's Plan of Action and are committed to continued close collaboration with African partners to identify and implement joint activities to build sustainable health-security capacity, to increase the membership, and strengthen the implementation of the BTWC and UNSCR 1540, and to achieve our shared objective of mitigating biological threats.
- J'espère que vous profiterez bien de cette occasion pour partager les meilleures pratiques et stratégies.
- Merci, thank you, Asanteni Sana!