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## Preventing and Responding to WMD Terrorist Attacks

**Website:**

[www.un.org/terrorism/wmd.shtml](http://www.un.org/terrorism/wmd.shtml)

**Members:**

- International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) (lead)
- Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (co-chair)
- UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)
- United Nations Interregional Crime A and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- Expert Staff of the 1540 Committee
- International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- Department of Public Information (DPI)
- Department of Security and Safety (DSS)
- International Maritime Organization (IMO)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

**Additional Partners:**

- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

**Purpose:**

Pursuant to the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, this working group addresses a number of areas to increase coordination among relevant UN and non-UN entities with regard to planning a response to an act using chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) weapons or materials, and to facilitate rapid assistance to member states.<sup>241</sup>

Led by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the working group has adopted a two-part work plan. The first part of the work plan aims to familiarize member states with the existing mechanisms to address these threats. To this end, the group first compiled experiences and lessons learned from states, to be taken forward into the second part of the work plan, in which the group suggests ways to enhance cooperation and coordination.

The working group convened a workshop, hosted by the IAEA in Vienna in March 2010 where representatives of the group's entities discussed their experiences with and capabilities for responding to a nuclear or radiological emergency, particularly in the context of a terrorist attack. The resultant report, entitled *Interagency Coordination in the Event of a Nuclear or Radiological Terrorist Attack: Current Status, Future Prospects* covers existing coordination capabilities in responding to a nuclear or radiological attack in the international system,<sup>242</sup> and offers recommendations for improving coordination in responding to this type of emergency, to be taken by individual entities of the working group within their respective mandates.<sup>243</sup> The input to this report served as a guideline for subsequent phase of the working group's work on responding to a chemical or biological terrorist attack.

The Working Group's second workshop was titled "International response and mitigation of a terrorist use of chemical, biological and toxin weapons or materials" hosted by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague in May 2011.<sup>244</sup> At the workshop, participants analyzed for the first time at the international level the potential of the UN and international organizations to respond to biological and chemical terrorism, and identified ways to strengthen these capacities. Led by OPCW, the working group collated the knowledge of a number of different actors in this area, including Interpol; the World Health Organization; and the World Organization for Animal Health. The working group also engaged with governments, private industries, and NGOs to gain their insights on chemical and biological security. The resultant report, *Interagency Coordination in the Event of a Terrorist Attack Using Chemical or Biological Weapons and Materials* was launched at the

International Peace Institute (IPI) in November, 2011. The report offers ten recommendations on strengthening a coordinated response in the event of such an attack, which is notably more difficult because there is no single agency tasked with responding to the threat.<sup>245</sup> Indeed, unlike the nuclear and radiological fields, which are overseen by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), there is currently no equivalent in the biological and chemical fields. Consequently, the recommendations of the report highlight the need for an interagency mechanism to ensure effective operational coordination and information sharing on chemical and biological threats.