

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary

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**Fact Sheet: Global Health Security**

*“To stop disease that spreads across borders, we must strengthen our systems of public health. We will continue the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. We will focus on the health of mothers and children. And we must come together to prevent, detect, and fight every kind of biological danger – whether it is a pandemic like H1N1, a terrorist threat, or a treatable disease. This week, America signed an agreement with the World Health Organization to affirm our commitment to meet this challenge. Today, I urge all nations to join us in meeting the WHO’s goal of making sure all nations have core capacities to address public health emergencies in place by 2012. That is what our commitment to the health of our people demands.”*

*--President Obama’s Address to the United Nations General Assembly, September 22, 2011*

This week President Obama addressed the United Nations General Assembly and urged the global community come together to prevent, detect, and fight every kind of biological danger, whether it is a pandemic, terrorist threat, or treatable disease. The United States is taking a multi-faceted approach to the full spectrum of challenges posed by infectious diseases, whether naturally occurring, accidental, or the result of a deliberate attack. Through fora such as the UN Security Resolution 1540, the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), and the World Health Organization (WHO), the United States is pursuing a common vision where disease no longer threatens the security and prosperity of nations. The “Global Health Security” policy framework is derived from the common approaches that shape key U.S. strategies and initiatives: the *National Strategy for Countering Biological Threats*, the *National Security Strategy*, *Department of Health and Human Services National Health Security Strategy*, and the Global Health Initiative.

Improving capacities to detect, report and respond to infectious diseases quickly and accurately lies at the heart of the global community’s ability to address all infectious disease threats, as reflected in the [WHO’s International Health Regulations \(IHR\)](#). The United States is committed to assisting countries in developing core capacities to assess, notify, and respond to infectious disease threats and to meet the WHO milestone of having these capacities in place by 2012. Coordinating across its diverse international health programs, the United States is focused on assisting host countries in meeting their IHR obligations.

**Commitment to the World Health Organization’s International Health Regulations**

On September 19<sup>th</sup>, the United States took an important step by signing an agreement with WHO on “Global Health Security,” affirming our shared commitment to strengthen cooperation on shared health security priorities. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by Health and Human Services Secretary Sebelius, WHO Director-General Chan and establishes a framework for collaboration on common goals in the area of global health security to ensure that the international community effectively manages public health risks. It outlines a number of areas of cooperation, including: global alert and response systems, the International Health Regulations, public health networks, global health leadership, risk management, and preparedness.

### **Biological Weapons Convention**

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC), which entered into force in 1975, is the first treaty to unequivocally ban the development and stockpiling of an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. The United States seeks to use an upcoming December Review Conference to advance the goals set forth in the President Obama’s [\*National Strategy for Countering Biological Threats\*](#), promulgating the view that effective BWC implementation requires multinational coordination and collaboration on concrete activities to counter biological proliferation and bioterrorism. The BWC Revcon offers an important opportunity to revitalize international efforts against these threats, helping to build global capacity to combat infectious diseases, prevent biological weapons proliferation and bioterrorism, and bring security, health, and scientific communities together to raise awareness of evolving biological risks and develop practices to manage them.

### **Global Health Initiative**

President Obama’s Global Health Initiative (GHI), launched in May 2009, partners with countries to improve health outcomes through strengthened health systems, increased and integrated investments in maternal and child health, family planning, nutrition and infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases, and through a focus on improving the health of women, newborns and children. One of the key principles of the GHI focuses is strengthening health systems to save lives and achieve sustainable outcomes.

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