

# Full text

## APPEAL

### of the International Committee of the Red Cross on *Biotechnology, Weapons and Humanity*

Alarmed by the potential hostile uses of biotechnology, **the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) appeals** to:

⇒ all political and military authorities to strengthen their commitment to the international humanitarian law norms which prohibit the hostile uses of biological agents, and to work together to subject potentially dangerous biotechnology to effective controls.

⇒ the scientific and medical communities, industry and civil society in general to ensure that potentially dangerous biological knowledge and agents be subject to effective controls.

**The ICRC appeals in particular:**

#### **TO ALL POLITICAL AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES**

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- To become parties to the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, if they have not already done so, to encourage States which are not parties to become parties, and to lift reservations on use to the 1925 Geneva Protocol,
- To resume with determination efforts to ensure faithful implementation of these treaties and develop appropriate mechanisms to maintain their relevance in the face of scientific developments,
- To adopt stringent national legislation, where it does not yet exist, for implementation of the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, and to enact effective controls on biological agents with potential for abuse,
- To ensure that any person who commits acts prohibited by the above instruments is prosecuted,
- To undertake actions to ensure that the legal norms prohibiting biological warfare are known and respected by members of armed forces,
- To encourage the development of effective codes of conduct by scientific and medical associations and by industry to govern activities and biological agents with potential for abuse, and

- To enhance international cooperation, including through the development of greater international capacity to monitor and respond to outbreaks of infectious disease.

## **TO THE SCIENTIFIC AND MEDICAL COMMUNITIES AND TO THE BIOTECHNOLOGY AND PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRIES**

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- To scrutinize all research with potentially dangerous consequences and to ensure it is submitted to rigorous and independent peer review,
- To adopt professional and industrial codes of conduct aimed at preventing the abuse of biological agents,
- To ensure effective regulation of research programs, facilities and biological agents which may lend themselves to misuse, and supervision of individuals with access to sensitive technologies, and
- To support enhanced national and international programs to prevent and respond to the spread of infectious disease.

The ICRC calls on all those addressed here to assume their responsibilities as members of a species whose future may be gravely threatened by abuse of biological knowledge. The ICRC appeals to you to make your contribution to the age-old effort to protect humanity from disease. We urge you to consider the threshold at which we all stand and to remember our common humanity.

The ICRC urges States to adopt at a high political level an international Declaration on "Biotechnology, Weapons and Humanity" containing a renewed commitment to existing norms and specific commitments to future preventive action.

Geneva, September 2002