

Call for a CBRN Mitigation and Recovery International Technical Working Group

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For decades, the use and threat of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons has prompted the collection of data, development of methods and publication of technical documents that address issues related to mitigation and recovery. Such information has primarily been derived from military research or doctrine and so has limited applicability to the more complex issue of civilian protection. The current volatility of international relationships has intensified the likelihood of a CBRN event involving civilian casualties and national infrastructures. Research and development reported at this conference over the past decade has identified many promising technologies and approaches for responding to CBRN incidents and, correspondingly, the need to develop a common approach and harmonized guidance. However, a global consensus based on such evidence has yet to be established.

The international community has important precedence in establishing technical working groups to address related topics in CBRN preparation and response. The intricacy of these topics requires a unique panel of expertise to navigate the breadth of data, coordinate dissemination, assess 'perceived best practices', assist in the design and evaluation of exercises and provide evidence-based guidance. For example, the Chemical and Biological Working Group of the World Health Organization and the Nuclear Forensics International Working Group grew out of a natural progression in the state of knowledge and a recognition by international technical leadership that a critical gap in preparation and response to radiological and nuclear threats existed. Therefore, we propose the formation of an international working group on CBRN mitigation and recovery to foster collaboration, share recent experiences, develop and reinforce evidence-based best practices and coordinate an international effort to close identified, critical gaps in our knowledge and capabilities. This Conference marks our initial effort in garnering support and participation from the international community to form such a working group.