

**Statement by the Representative of the Russian Delegation at the Meeting of
States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) on
Agenda Item 5 “General Debate”
(Geneva, November 22, 2021)**

Distinguished Mr. Chairperson,

We would like to congratulate you on the election to this responsible post and we are confident that your strong leadership will help meet the objectives of the Meeting. You can count on the support and cooperation of the Russian delegation.

The current review cycle is nearing completion. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and difficulties in organizing in-person events we are well positioned to create substantive basis for a successful Ninth BWC Review Conference. It is already in our power to map out its recommendations and decisions. Meetings of Experts held in August - September 2021 have shown that there are several issues on which States Parties to the BWC are able to build consensus.

In light of the discussions the Russian Federation has prepared and circulated among delegations a “food-for-thought” paper for possible inclusion in the MSP final document. We are ready for constructive and expert work in order to reach a mutually acceptable text. Note that we would prefer stronger and clearer language but we proceeded from the need to reach general agreement.

Russia has consistently favoured a prompt resumption of talks on a legally binding Protocol to the BWC which provides for, among other things, an effective verification mechanism. At the same time, being realistic, we understand that due to the unyielding position of one of the delegations the work is unlikely to get started.

In this regard, the Russian delegation has submitted and continues to promote initiatives aimed at strengthening and institutionalization of the BWC regime. First and foremost, they include establishing an Open-ended Working Group to elaborate measures and proposals on strengthening the BWC, creating

mobile biomedical units within the BWC to render assistance in case of the use of biological weapons and to help combat epidemics of various origins, introducing an investigative mechanism with regard to the alleged breach of obligations under the Convention in line with Article VI, as well as founding the Scientific Advisory Committee which would analyse scientific and technical developments relevant to the BWC and provide recommendations to States Parties. These approaches are fully shared by CSTO and CIS member states, as reflected in joint statements of Foreign Ministers in support of the BWC of May 19 and October 14, 2021 respectively.

Moreover, Russia supports proposals made by other countries to enhance the BWC institutional basis. In particular, we welcome Chinese initiatives to establish within the BWC an independent, non-discriminatory export control mechanism as well as a model of voluntary Code of Conduct for bioscientists.

The determination of both countries to strengthen the BWC regime has fully manifested in the relevant joint statement made by Foreign Ministers of Russia and China which was voiced at the session of the UNGA First Committee on October 7. It calls for joint efforts leading to the goal of enhancing the BWC on a reliable and legally binding basis. Both countries believe that the BWC functions, including those that relate to the UN Security Council, should not be duplicated by other mechanisms. The Ministers advocate the adoption of supportive measures aimed at improving the implementation of the Convention already at the present stage, including the establishment of biomedical units and the Scientific Advisory Committee.

Russia and China note the importance of improving confidence building measures implemented under the Convention, including by adding to the accountability form information on military biomedical activities carried out by the BWC States Parties abroad, in order to fill in information gaps and increase transparency. The significant expansion of such activities, especially in countries near to us, raises questions about their true nature and content, and we consider them to be a particular risk factor. Unfortunately, States Parties, specifically the

United States and their NATO allies, conduct such activities and do not provide information about them within the framework of existing confidence building measures.

The Russian Federation, as I have already said, supports improving confidence building and transparency measures. However, they should not replace verification within the BWC. Therefore, we are against attempts to present “voluntary peer reviews” of dual use microbiological facilities as an alternative to verification, with the declared goal of “increasing transparency” and “providing assurance” of the absence of prohibited activities. We are still convinced that such visits “at one’s invitation” have no clear objective, effective methodology as well as objective evaluation criteria of information obtained. Hence, there is a high risk of manipulations, especially political ones.

In conclusion, we would like to declare with responsibility that the Russian delegation stands ready to cooperate very closely with all the delegations present at the MSP with a focus on obtaining specific practical results.

Thank you.