Statement by VERTIC to the 2020 Meeting of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention

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Mr. Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

VERTIC thanks the States Parties to the BWC for the opportunity to speak today.

Article IV of the BWC obliges each state party, in accordance with its constitutional processes, to take any necessary measures to prohibit and prevent biological weapons in its territory and anywhere under its jurisdiction or control. VERTIC’s National Implementation Measures, or NIM, programme provides cost-free awareness-raising, legal analysis and legislative drafting assistance to interested states to strengthen their national legal frameworks for the BWC.

VERTIC’s NIM programme has continued to provide legislative assistance to states around the globe under a number of projects, despite the challenges caused by the pandemic. We are grateful to be doing so with funding support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Union and the United States Department of State with CRDF Global.

The NIM programme utilises a number of tools in order to conduct its legislative assistance activities. Such tools include recently revised fact sheets on the BWC and the creation of a BWC National Authority. These documents provide guidance on the types of national implementation measures that may be required for implementation of the BWC and the creation of a BWC National Authority, as well as basic facts about the Convention. We hope that the fact sheets will serve as useful instruments for awareness-raising about the BWC and implementation obligations under the Convention.

Another tool that was published for the first time in 2021, is the legislation survey template for implementation of the BWC. This template helps compare a state’s national laws and regulations against 137 distinct national implementation measures. The analysis of existing legislation is important, because it allows states to examine which legislative measures are necessary to fully implement their international obligations. Through the publication of this tool, we hope to reach more stakeholders so they can gain a better understanding of the specific national implementation measures that can be considered in their legislation.

To avoid duplication of efforts and foster international cooperation, NIM legal officers collaborate and coordinate with international and regional partners. For example, we are
pleased to be contributing to ongoing projects with the Implementation Support Unit and UNODA to strengthen BWC implementing legislation in a number of countries. We further participate in relevant meetings of the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction and the Global Health Security Agenda, as important international efforts to support the BWC.

We currently have project-based capacity to work with additional countries and remain available to discuss our assistance offer with interested states parties, including under our project ‘Advancing BWC National Implementation: An offer of assistance’ with CRDF Global, funded by the US Department of State.

We look forward to continued partnerships to strengthen BWC legislative implementation worldwide in the future.

Thank you Mr. Chair