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РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ
ПРИ ОТДЕЛЕНИИ ООН И ДРУГИХ
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯХ
В ЖЕНЕВЕ



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STATEMENT

by

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**HEAD OF THE RUSSIAN DELEGATION
AT THE MEETING OF STATES PARTIES
TO THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION**

Geneva, December 10, 2012



Mr. Chairman,

Colleagues,

The Russian Federation fully supports the Convention on the Prohibition of Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and Their Destruction. We are convinced that the BTWC is one of the basic disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms, which plays an important role in ensuring global security. Compliance with the commitments under the Convention is one of priorities of the Russian state policy.

The final document adopted at the Seventh BTWC Review Conference is well-balanced. We believe that the basis for joint work towards a strengthened BTWC regime is the implementation of the decisions of the Seventh Review Conference.

The July BTWC Meeting of Experts on the intersession agenda demonstrated once again that we can efficiently cope with the tasks set through collective efforts. The Russian delegation stands ready to continue this constructive work.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to elaborate on four standing agenda items which we have agreed to jointly address in 2012.

Item One. Cooperation and Assistance under Article X

Russia regards the fulfillment of obligations under Article X of the Convention as an important factor of the States Parties' cooperation in peaceful biological activities aimed at enhancing their biosafety capacities and, therefore, strengthening of the BTWC regime. Such activities should be open and transparent. The Russian Federation advocates the provision of comprehensive

information on the purposes, goals and expected results of the assistance granted.

We believe it necessary to establish specific criteria that help to understand which modes of assistance lie within the scope of Article X. At present, the concept of such assistance is vague. It is not a hidden fact that ~~certain projects and programs of donor countries have little relevance to the~~ BTWC subject matter, and "parallel" reports are generated within such international organizations as the WTO, OIE and FAO. We, the BTWC States Parties, should focus rather on achieving the purposes of the Convention set forth primarily in its Articles I and II, i.e. never to develop, produce, stockpile, acquire or transfer biological weapons.

The Russian Federation has a solid scientific base, expertise and means to fight infectious diseases of humans, animals and plants. We actively cooperate with the stakeholders and international organizations in combating such diseases.

In 2011, Russia initiated the signing of framework memoranda on cooperation in combating infectious diseases with Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Procedures have been set to provide assistance to these countries in the fight against epidemics, including training and logistic assistance. Information on the concluded agreements is published in the websites of the Federal Service on Customers' Rights Protection and Human Well-Being Surveillance and Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance. Various institutions exist within the CIS (Coordination Council on the Problems of Sanitary Protection of the CIS countries' territories, CIS Intergovernmental Council for Veterinary Cooperation, Coordination Council for Plant Quarantine), which are responsible, *inter alia*, for harmonization and unification of legal and regulatory, as well as methodological bases on sanitary protection of the territories of the Member States, interaction in sanitary and epidemiological surveillance, training of specialists and exchange of experience.

We are conscious of the fact that while contributing to the enhancement of inter-State exchanges through the provision of equipment, materials, scientific and technical information on the use of biological materials for peaceful purposes, we should exclude any possibility of the use of biological agents and toxins for weapons production. In order to achieve the required balance between the interests of the bio-technological development and strict compliance with the ban on biological weapons, all the States involved in international cooperation should ensure that their national legislation and executive authorities are ready to guarantee meticulous and full compliance with the BTWC obligations.

These requirements are determined by the Convention and decisions of the review conferences. Doubts arise over the legitimacy of any additional requirements suggested by the donor States on an individual basis.

We believe that an ultimate solution to the problem can be achieved, primarily, though a sustainable and acceptable-to-all balance in implementing Articles X and III. These matters require continues and intensive work both on national and international levels, as well as the involvement of relevant international organizations. With that, we believe it necessary to clearly define common goals and modes of cooperation to ensure that the activities of such organizations do not fall outside their competences.

Furthermore, such initiatives as calls to the BTWC States Parties to provide information on their needs in national implementation of the International Medico-Sanitary Rules (IMSR, 2005) have, in our view, no relation to the BTWC aims and goals. The IMSR is an instrument of international humanitarian healthcare cooperation, and it is the WTO's task to facilitate the adoption of these rules.

It is important to avoid duplication and prevent diversion of the BTWC resources to general biological or medical tasks that have no direct link to strengthening of the Convention regime.

The Russian Federation intends to continue cooperation in accordance with Article X to ensure equal and unconditioned security for all States Parties to the Convention.

Item Two. Review of scientific and technological activities relevant to the Convention

The Russian Federation stands ready for an impartial analysis of biological risks, challenges and threats linked to the rapid development of life sciences, convergence of modern trends in biology, chemistry and computer science. However, the term "international risk management system" remains unclear, as well as the ways of how such a system can be incorporated into the international system of countering the threat of biological and toxin weapons being developed, produced and used.

We regard as counterproductive the attempts of certain States Parties to consider general tendencies or specific biological studies behind the scenes without the representatives of the other participants to the Convention, and then draw conclusions which can lead to international consequences.

We are concerned over the arbitrary interpretation of the Convention provisions that allows to a number of countries to carry out scientific studies and projects under the veil of fight against infectious diseases, which result in the emergence of new microorganisms with altered pathogenic properties – potential biological weapons agents. Claims that data on such potentially weaponized research and developments is eventually made public do not exclude the question of how, given all the BTWC bans, such studies could be carried out at all and who sponsored them.

We propose to consider specific criteria to ensure that scientific studies are classified as dual-use activities and their hazard levels are clearly set.

Item Three. National implementation of the BTWC

Russia views the national implementation of the BTWC by the States Parties as a crucial element of its consolidation and reaffirms its commitment to

respect Russia's obligations under the Convention. Therefore, the relevant Russian legislation aims at preventing any attempts to violate the BTWC.

The Russian legislation prohibits the development of biological weapons and biological programs inconsistent with the Convention provisions. Russia's Penal Code criminalizes and set punishment measures for such activity.

Russia has an effective export controls system. We have adopted and have been continuously updating control lists of pathogens, toxins, equipment and technology of a potential dual-use application. National circulation of hazardous biological materials and global transfers of controlled goods, including intangible transfers, are carried out under a strict State licensing regime.

Regulations laying down requirements for equipment, premises, competences and working conditions, safe handling of pathogens and toxins, including storage, transport and maintenance, have been adopted and are regularly updated.

The current system of safe treatment of microorganisms, other biological agents and toxins sets forth responsibilities of both individuals and legal entities regardless of their affiliation with public agencies and form of ownership.

We gave a detailed account of the relevant Russian legislation to the States Parties at 2003 and 2007 intersessional meetings. The Russian Ministry of Industry and Trade as a national authority responsible for the implementation of the Convention maintains and updates a database of legal instruments and rules regulating activities in the BTWC area. We are open to consultations and cooperation with all States Parties on any matters related to the implementation of the Convention.

We are convinced that an early adoption by all States Parties of national measures for full-scale implementation of the BTWC will help build a greater confidence in States Parties' strict compliance with its provisions, uphold the Convention authority and increase the number of participating States.

Item Four. Participation of States Parties in strengthening of the confidence-building measures

We view the CBMs as an important transparency tool and the main and essential element of the Convention verification mechanism. More than once our review conferences have insisted that the Parties commit themselves to ~~providing information on their biological objects and activities related to the~~ Convention. The failure to fulfill this commitment does not help build a greater confidence. In our view, it is essential to provide for a universal implementation of this commitment.

We have repeatedly stated that the adoption of the international verification mechanism to monitor States Parties' implementation of the BTWC can build a better confidence in the inviolability of the Convention regime. Regrettably, we still fail to arrange a substantial discussion on verification. However, Russia is not the only one who has been addressing this issue. Our common aspirations let us see the ways for placing the issue of verification mechanism on the agenda of the next Review Conference and following intersessional program. We are confident that the sooner we start our substantial discussions of the issue the earlier we get tangible progress on strengthening the BTWC regime.

Let me commend the attempts of some countries to promote 'voluntary transparency measures' as a substitute for verification. We do not mind to enhance openness but we doubt that the suggested measures which look more like an 'awareness-raising' visit of political elite will contribute to confidence-building in practice. On the contrary, such false transparency may create an illusion of the irrelevance of verification. We cannot accept it and look forward to further substantial discussions on the matter.

Thank you for your attention.