STATEMENT
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THE RUSSIAN DELEGATION
MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES
TO THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION
STANDING AGENDA ITEM: COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE, WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON STRENGTHENING COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE UNDER ARTICLE X

Geneva, December 16, 2015
Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Russian delegation is convinced that providing assistance in compliance with Article X for preventing diseases and for other peaceful purposes is not just a free will, but an obligation of States Parties and a key element for the implementation of the Convention.

Russia gradually intensifies its efforts as a donor country to assist States-Partners in building biological security capacity. Despite the complicated economic circumstances, the Government of the Russian Federation continues to fund assistance measures (that is provided both bilaterally and together with relevant international organizations) to countries in need in order to ensure sanitary and epidemiological wellbeing of the population.

At the August Meeting of Experts we presented Russian current projects and programs of assisting the countries in need in the following areas: equipment of laboratory services, personnel training, developing national systems of biological security and sanitary territory control, building research and development capacity for improving monitoring and forecasting of infectious diseases.

I will not dwell on these programs, but would only like to add that for the last 6 month the Government of the Russian Federation adopted a number of decisions on additional financing and committed 15.3 million US dollars and 1.2 million rubles for 2016–2018 (about 35 million US dollars totally) into programs of assistance to the countries that are geared to combat infectious diseases.

In particular, the decision was made to continue providing aid to the Republic of Guinea in developing national system to control and monitor dangerous infections, including establishing and equipping the relevant research center, transfer of equipment, including mobile virology laboratories, which proved to be useful during Ebola outbreak, and training of medical workers. Within the Russian assistance project, Guinea and St. Petersburg currently host training programs for Guinean personnel in epidemiology and biological security.

Let me remind you that Russia from the very beginning has actively engaged in international efforts on addressing Ebola outbreak in West Africa, and total Russian contribution accounted to over 60 million US dollars, including over a year long operation of the specialized anti-epidemic unit in Guinea, transfer of a 200-bed field hospital, construction of a 65-bed stationary hospital for treating infectious patients.

Besides, Russian helicopters and teams are operating in West Africa and solving logistical tasks for combating Ebola. The Russian Government allocated totally about 20 million US dollars to the WHO, UNICEF, World Food Program, UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund, World

November, 2015, the Government of the Russian Federation also adopted a decision on ongoing assistance in 2016–2018 to the countries of East Europe and Central Asia in combating HIV and other infections, within its framework training of laboratory workers will be carried out, the supply of the States-Partners with gratuitous laboratory equipment and test-systems, as well as joint epidemiological researches. In 2014–2015 the value of the equipment for virology laboratories and diagnostics, transferred within the program to CIS countries, amounted to over 230 million rubles, over 150 specialists were trained.

Russia constantly supports the implementation of the International Health Regulations. Four truck-mounted mobile detection laboratories for monitoring natural focuses of dangerous infections were transferred to Belarus and Kazakhstan for assistance. In 2016 such produced in Russia laboratories will be gratuitously transferred to Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Besides, e-learning modules were developed and training of personnel from States-Partners was facilitated on the International Health Regulations and sanitary territory control. The WHO conducts an additional work within an earmarked contribution of 2.5 million US dollars, that is, providing institutional and methodology support to implementation of the International health regulations and training of personnel.

Substantial funds were allocated by the Russian Government in 2015 for providing assistance to new members of the Eurasian Economic Union, that are Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, for improving equipment of laboratories and border control check points and training personnel in order to increase the capacity for ensuring sanitary and epidemiological wellbeing of the population and sanitary protection of territories.

It is just a small part of the substantial work that is being carried out by Russia and related to assistance in preventing diseases and other peaceful purposes. We intend to continue this work and carry it out in East Europe and Central Asia, as well as in Africa and South East Asia.

In short term we are planning to support Viet Nam, since we signed in 2015 at the interagency level 2015-2017 Action Plan to Implement the Cooperation Programme in Assisting the Socialist Republic of Vietnam Ensure the Sanitary-Epidemiological Wellbeing of the Population. Russia is also interested in enhancing cooperation and providing assistance to other countries of South East Asia, including Myanmar and Laos.

We will make ongoing efforts to provide assistance in order to increase common regional capacity of the countries of East Europe and Central Asia in combating emergency threats, related to sanitary and epidemiological wellbeing of the population and establishing
harmonized inter-country system of prevention and response to these threats that would operate on the basis of unified standards and procedures. We intend to combat the threats of poliomyelitis renaissance and emerging and trans-boundary spreading of dangerous feral herd infections.

Regional coordination mechanisms, where Russia participates, play an important role in conducting joint work and providing mutual assistance in combating infectious diseases. In this regard, we express our gratitude to South Korea, since at its initiative and with the Russian participation a statement "on Enhancing Regional Health Security relating to Infectious Diseases with Epidemic and Pandemic Potential" was developed and adopted at the Heads of State and Government level at the East Asia Summit, held in Kuala Lumpur on November 22, 2015.

We would also like to thank our BRICS partners, who supported this year Russian proposal on enhancing cooperation between Member States in combating infectious diseases and ensuring sanitary and epidemiological safety of the population that was set forth by the BRICS Leaders.

In Ufa Declaration BRICS Leaders expressed their intention to cooperate in the following areas:

- managing risks, related to new emerging infections with pandemic potential;
- fulfilling obligations on reducing the spread of epidemics hampering development and their elimination;
- scientific researches, developments, production and supply of healthcare products for facilitating access to prevention and treatment of infectious diseases.

Mr. Chairman

The main guiding principle for Russia that should also be guiding for all providing assistance States, as we see it, is respecting interests of assistance recipients and building up their own capacity to identify biological threats and respond to them. The ultimate goal of this work is to develop a self-reliant system of preventing healthcare emergencies in countries receiving support.

Therefore, we stand firmly against programs and initiatives that are declared to be providing assistance, but are actually aimed at strengthening national security of donor countries and establishing unilateral control over biotechnological capacity of the countries receiving this so-called assistance.
That is why in conclusion I would like to stress on three following points:

First. The Russian delegation once and again calls for the discussion on the developing clear criteria for assistance within the BWC. It is vital for strengthening the Convention's regime and avoiding its substitution by other mechanisms that are managed by other organizations.

Second. More than that, the activity of States Parties to the BWC on transferring knowledge, technology, material and equipment for combating infectious diseases should be open and transparent regardless of its financial source. The Russian Federation stands for providing detailed information on such activity, in particular on its tasks, purposes and expected outcomes of donor countries' assistance in order to increase capacity of laboratory services in other countries. In our view, there is a need to avoid double standards and dual-use in providing assistance, when a country allocates funds for technical assistance having in mind completely different disguised goals.

Finally, we deem it essential to strengthen the role of the BWC as a coordinator of assistance for the purposes of the Convention, but provided in other formats. The BWC is the only legitimate multilateral mechanism for prohibiting the development and production of biological and toxin weapons. In this regard, efforts on assisting countries in need in using knowledge, information, technology, materials and equipment that are related to Article X, but implemented in other formats such as Global Partnership, should be harmonized and coordinated with the BWC. Moreover, these initiatives should not be geared to their own goals, but to the Convention and strengthening its key role in the system of global efforts related to the prohibition of biological weapons.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman