Statement by the Head of the delegation of the Russian Federation

The Chief of the Department for Nonproliferation and Arms Control of the Russian Foreign Ministry Mr. Vladimir Yermakov

At the Meeting of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention

Item 5 of the Agenda:
«General Debate»

Geneva, December 4, 2018
Mr. Chairman,

We note with satisfaction that at a regular Meeting of Experts to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in August positive steps forward have been taken on some of the key issues of Convention’s implementation.

Primarily it concerns Russian initiative on the use of mobile medical and biological units within the framework of the BWC. Russia and the United Kingdom submitted two working papers devoted to this issue. They were addressed in a constructive way at a high professional level.

A high potential of the concept of mobile medical and biological units has been confirmed, and so has its relevance with regard to strengthening the Convention. It is very important in the context of creating efficient mechanisms for implementing Article VII (on the assistance and protection from biological weapons).

For this meeting Russia and the United Kingdom have prepared a joint document devoted to emergency response. We offer to consider a number of ideas on promoting the concept of mobile medical and biological units.

Our document will be presented and addressed at the side event which will take place on Thursday, December 6, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. in room XXIV. We encourage everybody to take the most active part in it.

At the Meeting of Experts in August other useful ideas were pointed out.

Since time is limited, I will draw your attention only to the working paper on institutional strengthening of the Convention prepared by Cuba. We agree with our Cuban colleagues that we all should continue to carefully preserve the legacy of the negotiating body for the elaboration of a legally-binding protocol on strengthening the Convention – Special Group of the States Parties. We support the idea of conducting targeted work in the intersessional period on the new review of the results achieved by the Special Group in order to consider the possibility of updating and active use of those achievements that continue to receive wide support of the States Parties.
The Chinese initiative on elaborating a common export control mechanism within the BWC on the basis that is clear and equal for all states is essential.

Mr. Chairman,

The BWC is a universal international treaty, and its importance to ensure global security cannot be revised.

Russia has consistently stood for building the negotiating process within the BWC that is aimed at improving implementation of all its provisions. The absolute majority of states shares our view. This is the reason why we consider any attempts to create parallel mechanisms circumventing the Convention as inappropriate.

We are particularly concerned with the situation when such moves are a product of secret bureaucratic work following “we-decide-all-for-you-and-you-follow-it” principle, rather than a result of a negotiating process between states.

In this context we once again draw your attention to the fact that Russia, as well as other states, has serious questions with regard to the biological section of the “Agenda for Disarmament”, presented by the UN Secretary-General in May. The fragmentation of interstate processes, let alone any attempts to replace negotiating work conducted by states within the BWC with “alternative” activities of international bureaucracy that is not controlled by states is inadmissible.

We believe one of the objectives of the meeting is to ensure financial stability of the intersessional programme. Outstanding contributions of States Parties and irregular balance of payments are the main problems here. Unless we solve them, we cannot guarantee that our work will be successful.

The Russian delegation intends to ensure good performance of the forum and is ready to cooperate fruitfully with all its members.