Statement by the Deputy Head of the Delegation of the Russian Federation, Deputy Director of the Department for Non-proliferation and Arms Control of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Konstantin Vorontsov at the Ninth Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention Review Conference to exercise the right of reply

(Geneva, 28 November 2022)

Mr President,

The Russian Federation categorically rejects any attempts by the Western States to question the convincing documents and arguments which we have submitted in the context of the US and Ukrainian military and biological activity on the territory of Ukraine in violation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). No country, except for the Western States, have contested the Russian documents and convincing arguments. We consider this as yet another attempt by the West to present their perspective as the opinion of the whole international community. This is deploring.

We would like to reiterate that following the consultative meeting of the States Parties to the BTWC and the UN Security Council meetings on the military and biological activity in Ukraine, it was found that the Russian Federation has applied Articles V and VI of the Convention in full compliance with their provisions. It was also reaffirmed that following these meetings no consensus has been found in respect of the questions raised by the Russian Federation. These issues remain open and require solutions.

We also categorically reject Georgian allegations against Russia in the context of the activities of the Lugar Center for Public Health Research at Alekseevka community (Tbilisi). Such allegations are aimed at diverting the attention of the international community from military and biological activity of foreign States at the premises of this Center. This raises the most serious concerns in the framework of the BTWC implementation and requires the attention of the international community. It is evident that they are trying to hide the activity of the the U.S. Army Medical Research Directorate-Georgia (USAMRD-G), located at the premises of the Center.

Despite the statements made by the Georgian Government that it exercises
the "full control and financing" of this biolaboratory, the research activities conducted within its premises (including maintenance and security costs) are de-facto supervised and funded by the U.S. Military Department and its agencies. Experiments conducted at this facility on the use of insects as hawkers of highly dangerous biological agents and infections, as well as equipping munitions with poisonous substances and infectious agents, prove this. The relevant information was officially published at the Center's web-site.

It will be wise to organize a visit of the Russian experts to this biological facility at Alekseevka only under provision of the guarantees to ensure access to all laboratory buildings (including the ones occupied by the American experts), as well as the relevant documents. This is the format that will make it possible to conduct practical verification activities. We are not going to participate in this campaign aimed at hiding a true nature of the activity conducted by the U.S. Military Department close to Russia's borders. We believe that this visit should be held in a bilateral format without participation of other States (we are ready to make an exception for Pentagon officials accredited to the Center), as well as international and regional organizations. We are looking forward for an official response of Georgia to our note of June, 2019, to provide the necessary clarifications with regard to the modalities of the possible visit.

The mechanism of peer reviews of dual-use microbiological facilities, promoted by a number of western States, to which the delegation of Georgia refers, has nothing to do with the assessment of the States Parties' compliance to their commitments. It has never been endorsed by consensus of the States Parties to the BTWC, as Georgia is trying to represent it.

We still have serious concerns about such peer-review visits. It leaves no doubt that such visits are being programmed by the West in advance. No objectives, methodology or criteria to assess the obtained information in the framework of the BTWC are agreed upon. All this can trigger politically-motivated allegations.

Thank you.