Statement by VERTIC to the Ninth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention
28 November – 16 December 2022
Informal Session for NGOs, Wednesday 30 November 2022

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Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

VERTIC has supported the BWC for over 20 years, through its work on national measures to implement the Convention, and on verification and compliance mechanisms. Fifty years since its opening for signature, we believe the BWC remains central to efforts to prohibit and prevent biological and toxin weapons and to promote safe and secure cooperation for the peaceful uses of biological agents and toxins. Continuing adherence to the Convention also shows its ongoing relevance, with six additional States joining since 2016.

The 184 States Parties must perform their obligations in good faith and provide assurance that the purposes of the preamble and the provisions of the Convention are being realised.

Concerns about compliance need to be addressed through existing mechanisms. Further, States Parties need to agree on means to not only uphold, but also strengthen the Convention. Towards these goals, VERTIC supports the proposals on Reassurance and Transparency and on Institutional Strengthening in the joint NGO statement.

States Parties must give effect to the BWC at the national level by adopting, reviewing, updating and implementing comprehensive laws and regulations. Those should prohibit any activity with biological weapons, but also establish appropriate oversight and governance of activities with biological agents and toxins, including biosafety and
biosecurity measures. To this end, VERTIC supports the views and proposals on Universalisation and National Implementation in the joint NGO statement.

Since the Eighth Review Conference, VERTIC’s national implementation measures programme has continued to provide cost-free tailored knowledge sharing, legal analysis and legislative drafting assistance to interested states to strengthen national frameworks for the BWC. Our engagements worldwide have led to drafting new or amending legal texts, some of which are now in force. We have also developed and contributed to publicly available tools in multiple languages such as reports, factsheets, a BWC legislation survey template, guidance and model legislation. In addition, VERTIC has continued to provide technical support for universalisation of the Convention. We will present our work in more detail during side-events on 2 and 13 December.

VERTIC is pleased to have contributed to projects with the Implementation Support Unit and UNODA to strengthen BWC implementing legislation in a number of countries. We have also collaborated with other international and regional partners and joined important international initiatives on biosecurity and non-proliferation.

We thank the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Union CBRN Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative and BWC Extended Assistance Programmes, the United States Department of State with CRDF Global, and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office for their current support of our work.

We stand ready to continue contributing our technical, multidisciplinary and impartial expertise on implementation, verification and compliance to efforts to strengthen the BWC. In doing so, we look forward to increased and sustained engagement with all stakeholders, including States, the donor community whose funding for civil society is crucial, international and regional organisations and civil society partners.

Thank you.