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**STATEMENT BY VERTIC  
TO THE MEETING OF STATES PARTIES  
OF THE 1972 BIOLOGICAL AND TOXIN WEAPONS CONVENTION**  
Geneva, 3 – 6 December 2019

Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

VERTIC endorsed the joint NGO statement and we take this opportunity to highlight our work on legislative implementation and investigations of alleged use of biological weapons.

Since 2008, VERTIC has conducted legislative surveys of states' implementing legislation for the BWC and biological weapons-related provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 1540. Of the 146 States we have surveyed, 39% have prohibited the use of biological weapons and 27% have prohibited unauthorised activities with biological agents and toxins. We encourage States Parties to expedite their legislative activities and regularly review the effectiveness of their national measures, with international assistance upon request, to facilitate implementation of the Convention. VERTIC stands ready to provide legislative assistance to interested states, including legislative analysis and development and review of draft legislation.

VERTIC is pleased to be able to explain our legislative work with Central Asian partner countries under Project 53 of the European Union CBRN Centres of Excellence Initiative, during a side event today with BACAC (the Biosafety Association for Central Asia and the Caucasus) and the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence.

Chair, last month VERTIC conducted a table top exercise concerning investigation of alleged use of biological weapons and the UN Secretary-General's Mechanism. During our side event on this topic yesterday, we identified some of the key

challenges an international investigation could face. We highlighted the need to combine a solid planning and support capacity in international organisations in order to support flexible operational frameworks for deployed teams.

Chair, while we are gathered here to discuss the BWC, allow me to mention another international agreement relevant to biological weapons, namely the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court.

In 2017, States Parties to the Rome Statute agreed to rectify a problematic gap in its coverage by amending the Statute. This amendment has made the use of biological and toxin weapons, whether in international or non-international armed conflict, a war crime. Two States Parties to the Rome Statute, Luxembourg and Slovakia, have ratified this amendment since 2017.

Similar amendments were made in 2010 to include the use of poison and poisoned weapons as a war crime. 38 States Parties to the Rome Statute have ratified this amendment so far.

We urge BWC States Parties that are also party to the Rome Statute to ratify these amendments and to implement the necessary changes in national criminal law as soon as possible. This will ensure a harmonised and consistent approach to biological weapons within both international and domestic legal frameworks.

Thank you, Chair.