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**Statement by the Russian Federation on item 11 of the Provisional Agenda
“Regional results, priorities, the *four betters* and the Sustainable
Development Goals”**

Russian Federation

Background note

On item 11 of the provisional agenda of the 33rd session
of the Regional Conference for Europe, "Regional results, priorities,
the *four betters* and the Sustainable Development Goals"

The Russian Federation attaches great importance to FAO's work on the "One Health" concept. Specifically, in April 2021 the Russian Academy of Sciences held the IV International Symposium "One Health" in the format of an online conference, with the participation of Russia, India, China, South Africa, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Paraguay, Georgia and USA. The main outcome of this event was not only the exchange of knowledge and experience in the indicated sphere, but also a demonstration of the opportunities for the scientists of the different countries to unite in response to global challenges, one of which was the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

The Russian Federation is one of the first members to apportion financial resources in the amount of USD 3.25 million to strengthening FAO's activities on combating antimicrobial resistance in Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. This was done including in the framework of Russia's contribution to the implementation of the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly of the UN (2016).

Russian specialists actively participate in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, paying increased attention to developing and strengthening control mechanisms for food safety.

Cooperation on this issue is being actively developed in the context of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) is perfecting the regulatory framework on the basis of the international standards and recommendations of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), which will make it possible to provide the necessary security from the spread of various zoonotic diseases in the countries of the Union. Particular attention is paid to combating African Swine Fever, foot and mouth disease, and *peste des petits ruminants* (PPR). Interaction is gradually increasing between the veterinary services of EAEU member states. Since 2014, a Memorandum of Understanding has been in force between EEC and OIE and the corresponding programme for cooperation on issues regarding combating antimicrobial resistance and cooperation to support implementation of OIE standards in interstate and international trade.

On the whole, the epizootic situation in EAEU states remains under control. However, the information – supported by documents – about the use by the United States and several other Western countries of biolaboratories in the former Soviet Union, primarily in countries located along the perimeter of Russia's borders, is a cause for serious concern. In total there are about 30 such laboratories, including 15 in Ukraine.

According to the documents obtained, secret biological experiments were conducted in the laboratories in Ukraine, aimed at strengthening the pathogenic properties of plague, anthrax, tularemia, cholera and other deadly, dangerous diseases. The work was financed and overseen by the US Department of Defense threat reduction agency.

In particular, the documents mention the central reference laboratory with the bio defence level BSL-3 on the site of the Mechnikov Ukrainian Scientific-Research Anti-plague Institute in Odessa, as well as laboratories in Kiev, Lviv, Kharkov, Dnepr, Kherson, Ternopil, Uzhhorod, Vinnytsia.

Particular concern is caused by the information that the laboratories in Kiev, Kharkov and Odessa studied the possibility of spreading highly dangerous infections through migrating birds; bats, which can transmit viral pathogens (plague, leptospirosis, filoviruses, and coronaviruses) to humans, were also considered as vectors.

The deliberate concealment of data, both on the conducting of the research and on its results, is considered to be a violation of the 1971 UN Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction. Moreover, this is a challenge to the implementation of the "One Health" approach, since it multiplies the risk of the emergence and spread of zoonotic diseases.

Since implementation of the biolaboratory-based programme began, with the support of the USA and several other Western countries, there has been an increase in the number of cases of rubella, diphtheria and tuberculosis, the case numbers of which have increased more than 100-fold in Ukraine. WHO has assigned the country to the category of being at high risk of a polio outbreak. In 2016, there was an increase in swine flu, regular outbreaks of African swine fever, as well as diseases with symptoms similar to plague. We consider the activities of the laboratories in Ukraine to have posed a direct threat to the security not only of Russia and the countries of the EAEU, but also to the populations of EU countries.

We are particularly alarmed by the information that has recently appeared in the media about the possibility of the USA transferring the development of the Ukrainian biolaboratories to the territory of Mongolia, which could potentially also pose a threat to the countries of the Asia-Pacific region.

The Russian Federation reaffirms its openness and readiness to engage in dialogue and cooperation with all stakeholders on the "One Health" approach.