76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly - First Committee

Statement by Canada – General Debate

Delivered by Ms. Tania Roth
Advisor, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations
New York, 14 October 2021
[Mister/Madam] Chair,

Canada would like to address two issues consequential to the maintenance of international peace and security: responsible State behaviour in cyberspace, and due consideration for a gendered perspective in disarmament matters. These issues intersect with everything we do in First Committee, yet their impacts are understated.

A framework for responsible State behaviour in cyberspace is a prerequisite for long-term international peace and security.

Canada therefore welcomes the recent consensus reports of the UN cyber Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) and Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG). Through the 2015 GGE report, the international community agreed in 2015 by consensus on a set of comprehensive, voluntary norms to guide what States can and cannot do online. These norms were re-endorsed in the 2021 consensus reports of the UN GGE and OEWG.

The applicability of international law in cyberspace was also agreed to at the GGE in 2013 and 2015, and re-affirmed in the 2021 GGE and OEWG reports. Canada believes that the agreed norms and international law are sufficient to guide State behaviour in cyberspace. However, we recognize that more work is needed to implement these existing agreed norms and for States to explain how they see international law applying in cyberspace.

Practical confidence building measures and capacity building are two key elements of the framework for responsible State behaviour. Canada is active in both areas. For example, since 2015, Canada committed over 27 million dollars to cyber capacity building projects and works with various organizations to promote an open and secure internet.

Further, Canada is a co-sponsor of the Programme of Action proposal, supported by over 50 States. Once created, the Programme of Action could play an important role in guiding implementation of the framework for responsible State behaviour. We hope it will provide an inclusive forum for member States, the private sector, civil society and academia to contribute to implementing this framework.
Lastly, securing an open internet requires investing in gender equity and understanding the gendered impact of cybersecurity issues.

We are pleased that the OEWG recognized the importance of meaningful participation of women in cyber decision-making.

Of note, Canada funded research on the gender aspects of cyber security, accessible to all States on the OEWG’s online portal. Canada also proudly supports the Women in Cyber fellowship program, which has allowed over 30 female diplomats to participate in OEWG negotiations. We look forward to building on this program in upcoming UN cyber processes.

In addition to striving for inclusivity in cyberspace, it is necessary to recognize and integrate gender dimensions in our broader work on non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. By better understanding the gendered impact of weaponry and closing the persistent gender gap in disarmament, we can create effective, long-lasting initiatives that help address the world's most pressing security threats.

Canada continues to call on States to collect and share age and gendered-disaggregated data on the impact of weapons to help governments create informed policies that prevent violence and respond to victims effectively.

Canada is pleased with increased gender representation in specific security forums (such as the steady increase in women’s participation in the UNGA’s First and Third committees). However, the gender imbalance remains and we are thus missing important voices and perspectives at the table – voices and perspectives that are needed for the development of effective non-proliferation and disarmament methods.

Closing the gender gap is necessary for effective, sustainable initiatives and a prerequisite for an inclusive, peaceful and prosperous world. Canada will continue to work with all stakeholders to advocate for the inclusion of gender in all aspects of international security.

Thank you,