Statement of the Republic of Estonia

Thematic debate of clusters 5-7 of the UNGA 76th Session of the First Committee

New York, 18 October 2021

Estonia aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, but we would like to add some points on the issue of cybersecurity in our national capacity.

Mr Chair,

Estonia considers efforts to prevent and manage threats to international peace and security emanating from the malicious use of cyberspace to be of utmost importance.

Over the last decade, UN Member States have developed an effective normative framework for responsible state behaviour in cyberspace. This spring the successful consensus outcomes in the UN Group of Governmental Experts and the Open-Ended Working Group delivered a powerful reaffirmation of this framework, including the applicability of international law in cyberspace and the 11 norms of responsible state behaviour. The reports mark a significant global success, highlighting that UN Member States can reach and advance consensus on issues that are increasingly pertinent for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Building awareness on the malicious use of cyberspace and its potential impact was also the reason Estonia brought cybersecurity to the attention of the Security Council in June, by organising the first-ever open debate on this issue. The debate further provided an opportunity to spotlight the important work done over the past decade in the First Committee and the need to comply with the rules of responsible state behaviour on which we all have agreed.

Mr Chair,

We hold the firm view that existing international law, including the UN Charter in its entirety, international humanitarian law and international human rights law, provides comprehensive guidance for state behaviour in cyberspace. Deepening understanding on how international law
applies in cyberspace continues to be of crucial importance. In this regard, we particularly underline the value of the official compendium of the GGE report that featured voluntary national contributions on international law. We continue to encourage states to publish their views and are eager for further exchanges on these topics.

Estonia looks forward to engaging constructively in the upcoming discussions in the new Open-Ended Working Group, closely adhering to and building on the consensus we have already achieved. At the same time, we see notable merit in the establishment of a permanent, action-based and inclusive platform that would be specifically dedicated to implementing the acquis and supporting capacity-building efforts. Therefore, together with 53 states, Estonia supports the establishment of a Programme of Action for Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace.

As the number and sophistication of cyber incidents grows, it is clear that we need to work even more closely with the private sector and civil society. We deem it essential that the voice of the multi-stakeholder community is included prominently in these endeavours.

For Estonia, cyber capacity building, guided by the normative framework, continues to be a key priority in our international cooperation. The latest GGE and OEWG reports recommended a number of practical actions that would significantly increase cyber resilience and confidence. For example, establishing a Computer Emergency Response Team in each country or assigning Points of Contact could directly enhance cooperation and help to prevent and respond to incidents.

Estonia stresses its commitment to promoting stability and conflict prevention in cyberspace and looks forward to working together in a way that supports consensus, advances common understandings and ensures the maintenance of an open, free and secure cyberspace.

I thank you.