



# PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent Representative  
of Pakistan, during the First Substantive Session of the Open-ended  
Working Group on security of and in the use of information and  
communication technologies  
2021-2025**

**New York, 13 December 2021**

**Mr. Chairman,**

The Pakistan delegation congratulates you on your election as Chair of this Open-ended working group. We assure you of our full support and cooperation.

This OEWG, a UN mechanism with a universal membership and acting on the basis of consensus, is well placed to promote agreed responses to the challenges and opportunities posed by the rapid advances in the field of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs).

As regards, non-stakeholders participation in this group, we have already conveyed our support for your proposal to adhere to the practice of the previous OEWG.

**Mr. Chairman,**

ICT technologies and applications have enhanced access to information and knowledge, utilizations for health promotion and protection, efficient production and myriad other uses. These technologies were particularly critical during the Covid pandemic.

On the negative side, these technologies have expanded the domains of conflict. Cyber warfare has emerged as a new domain of warfare – from information warfare to actual cyber-attacks by states and non-states actors. Recent reports of suspected cyber attacks are illustrative. We must be particularly concerned at the significant increase in recent years in the

frequency of cyber attacks on critical infrastructure. These incidents of malicious use of ICT are diminishing trust and confidence among States; they lower the threshold of war and undermine international peace and security.

Ensuring the peaceful use of ICTs and preventing cyberspace from becoming a realm of conflict are the most critical challenges faced by this group.

We are also plagued by the exponential proliferation of disinformation through online platforms and social media. This is exacerbating social discord, competing nationalisms, discrimination, hate speech, stigmatization, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and related intolerances. This has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the extreme reliance on ICTs, yielding phenomena from fake cures to anti-vaccine conspiracies. This phenomenon of disinformation has a negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights, often constitutes interference in the internal affairs of states, erodes international cooperation and could pose a threat to international peace and security.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The adoption of the consensus report by the previous Open-ended Working Group in March this year was a significant and welcome development. It reinforces our conviction that global efforts to create a safe, secure, stable and peaceful ICT-environment can be achieved.

It is important to consolidate the progress achieved thus far and maintain the momentum for continuing this inclusive and transparent process.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The 2013 and 2015 Group of Governmental Experts and the recent report of OEWG contributed to the evolution of a broad consensus among Member States that international law, and in particular the Charter of the United Nations, are applicable and essential to maintain peace and stability in the ICT environment.

The UN Charter is unequivocal in upholding the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. These principles should serve as a guiding framework as we navigate the complexities of cyber governance.

A simple assertion, however, of the applicability of existing international law to cyber space is not sufficient to address the multifaceted legal challenges arising from ICTs. The extent, scope and nature of the applicability of international law, its interpretation in the context of the actual conduct of States and their use of ICTs, in specific context, acts and problems, all must be considered in determining their specific legal implications and application.

The GGEs compendium of views of member states could be a useful source in elaborating such a new instrument.

Pakistan therefore shares the view that it is essential to develop a legally binding international instrument, specifically tailored to the unique attributes of ICTs, to provide a regulatory framework that creates stability and safety in cyberspace. Such a legal framework should address the concerns and interests of all states, be based on consensus, and be promoted within the UN with the equal participation of all States.

The United Nations has a central role in promoting dialogue and international cooperation among Member States to develop a common understanding on all key aspects of the ICT matrix.

In parallel with the work of the group, there is also a need to work with the UN's Department of Communications and other relevant agencies to counter the proliferation of disinformation. Countering disinformation will require sustained efforts, international cooperation and multidimensional and multi-stakeholder engagement consistent with international law, including human rights and humanitarian law. Such work could eventually enrich the work of OEWG.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Appropriate confidence building measures (CBMs), such as voluntary exchange of information and best practices, can contribute to increasing transparency and predictability in cyberspace and reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings and thus reduce the risk of conflict. This can be an area of early progress for this OEWG.

Similarly, international cooperation for capacity building and sharing of requisite technologies to enhance cyber security could be another area of early progress.

**Mr. Chairman,**

We hope that the OEWG's deliberation can help in developing common understandings that can form the basis of future work towards preventing cyberspace from becoming a realm of conflict.

**Mr. Chairman,**

With a population of over 200 million people, and a flourishing digital landscape marked by growing number of online users, Pakistan attaches immense importance to leveraging digital technologies for enabling socio-economic development and facilitating more effective and efficient governance and public service delivery. Bridging the digital divide between developed and developing countries is essential for the global transition to modern and efficient national economies and effective international cooperation as well as to enhance the objective of cyber security.

I thank you

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