Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies – First substantive session (13-17 December 2021)

Regular institutional dialogue

Mr. Chair,

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the European Union, and would like to add a few remarks in its national capacity.

Over the past twenty years, the establishment within the United Nations of a series of working groups - first groups of governmental experts, then open-ended working groups bringing together all the States of the United Nations - has allowed for regular and structured exchanges on issues related to ICT in the context of international security.

The dialogue thus conducted within the framework of the GGE and then the OEWG has enabled States to maintain a common understanding of emerging threats related to the malicious use of ICTs, to develop norms applicable to the behavior of States, and to recommend measures for cooperation or conflict prevention. In so doing, this dialogue has made a useful contribution to the goal of a free, open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful cyberspace. France is committed to continuing this dialogue, under your leadership, within the framework of this new OEWG. We intend to contribute actively to this dialogue, to continue to deepen the normative framework for responsible State behavior, and to adapt it as appropriate to address new challenges and emerging threats in the ICT domain.

However, it has become clear that the continuation of this dialogue needs to be complemented - and strengthened - by "action-oriented" initiatives. Paragraph 73 of the final report of the previous OEWG emphasized that, in addition to continuing discussions on the further development of norms, it would be useful in the future to explore mechanisms to follow up on their implementation. Mr. Chair, in the guiding questions you circulated prior to this session, you also invited States to consider how a future regular institutional dialogue could support "action-oriented" measures.

As you know, Mr. Chair, France considers this to be one of the major priorities of our work. The norms set by the international community are all the more effective if they are effectively and uniformly implemented in all States and by all the actors concerned.

For this reason, together with 53 other States and the European Union, we are promoting the proposal for a Programme of Action, which would aim at establishing a permanent, dynamic, inclusive and action-oriented instrument within the framework of the United Nations. Let me briefly outline some of the main elements that structure this proposal:

1. The Program of Action would aim at setting up a permanent institutional structure, i.e. a platform that could support concrete projects, for example in the area of capacity building, and ensure regular follow-up through periodic meetings. As I mentioned yesterday in my intervention on capacity
building, this structure could be equipped with its own and sustainable resources, such as a secretariat and a trust fund, to carry out its missions.

2. This instrument would be dynamic, in the sense that it would integrate possible evolutions of the agreed normative framework, and would take into account the evolving threats and challenges related to international security in the context of ICTs. I indicated yesterday that the PoA would be used to support the implementation of the currently agreed normative framework, as it results in particular from General Assembly resolution 76/19, but that it could also in the future support the implementation of possible additional norms that would be adopted by consensus by States. In addition, at its periodic meetings, the Programme of Action could regularly assess the progress made in the implementation of the standards, analyse the evolution of the needs expressed by States and the evolution of emerging threats in the field of ICTs, and on this basis identify, if necessary, new priority areas for action.

3. The PoA would seek inclusiveness and complementarity of efforts. It would of course involve all interested States in its work, in accordance with the principle of inclusivity that must guide our work on ICTs. In addition, following a logic of complementarity and non-competition, the PoA would seek to coordinate its actions with those already deployed in the framework of existing initiatives.

4. Finally, and following the wish shared by a growing number of States, this Program would be action-oriented. I had the opportunity yesterday to explain that one of its major objectives would be to provide concrete support for national efforts to implement the agreed normative framework, through capacity building actions adapted to the needs expressed by States. Another possible line of work would be the development, in accordance with the recommendations of the previous OEWG report, of cooperation with the private sector, possibly within the framework of dedicated and specific working groups, in particular with a view to making the private sector contribute to efforts in areas such as the prevention of the proliferation of malicious tools, or the security of supply chains, which can have obvious repercussions in terms of international security and stability.

Mr. Chair, I will leave it at that for now, as a general statement of the vision behind the PoA proposal and the objectives that it pursues. Egypt will shed further light on different aspects of this proposal.

This vision must now be translated into specific modalities that we wish to define in an open and inclusive manner. This is why, in accordance with the convergent recommendations of the previous OEWG and the GGE, we stand ready with all the PoA co-sponsors to continue to develop this proposal within the framework of this Group, taking into account the views and suggestions of all interested States. Thank you.