Your Excellency,

Thank you for your invitation to submit recommendations to the OEWG.

Basing international capacity building upon agreed principles has the potential to both improve the effectiveness of capacity building and build confidence between countries. This confidence building arises from seeing other countries implement principles that have been collectively through the OEWG and because principles such as transparency reduce the risk of misinterpreting others’ international capacity building activity.

The inclusion of principles in the OEWG’s report was a welcome development. However, the potential benefits from this will only be realised if the OEWG 2021-2025 continues this work. Further action is needed to create the conditions for the principles to be effectively operationalised. For example, the OEWG could agree what implementing each principle would look like in practice. Furthermore, it could identify actions that will lead to the momentum for implementing the principles being sustained, global and inclusive.

How the principles are to be operationalised is especially relevant to the low and middle countries that most projects support. Their involvement in these discussions will be essential. It will also be necessary to involve stakeholders, not least because it is often companies and civil society organisations who are tasked with implementing capacity building projects and, therefore, applying the principles on the ground. There are also other processes working towards a principles-based approach to capacity building, such as the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise, with whom the OEWG should coordinate. I know there are many in the multistakeholder community who stand ready to contribute to the work of operationalising good principles for international cybersecurity capacity building.

I have provided additional content for this recommendation in a July 2021 article in the Journal of Cyber Policy on ‘Understanding cybersecurity capacity building and its relationship to norms and confidence building measures’.

Thank you for considering this contribution and sharing it with the OEWG members.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Collett
Developing Capacity