Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and San Marino align themselves with this statement.

1. Achieving better cybersecurity and combatting cyber threats is a key enabler for utilizing the economic and social opportunities that the deeply connected and digitized world offer. Against the background of the ever-increasing digital transformation and the numerous types of cybersecurity threats, developing capacities to prevent and mitigate cyber threats and activities requires a constant effort.

2. The need for increased cybersecurity has been further strengthened by the COVID- pandemic, which has highlighted the increasing dependence of both developed and developing countries on ICTs, and the vulnerability of interconnected systems in light of increasing determination and ability of malicious actors to conduct malicious cyber activities.

3. To meet the growing need, cyber capacity building needs to be prioritized, funding needs to increase, more efforts need to be undertaken to coordinate cyber capacity and further integration with larger development programs and strategies needs to be explored.

4. In order to contribute to these efforts, the EU has underlined the importance of cyber capacity building in its 2020 EU Cybersecurity Strategy for the Digital Decade, in which the EU reaffirms its continued commitment to supporting partners by increasing their cyber resilience and capacities to address cyber threats.
5. The strategy also outlines the ambition to establish a focused agenda for capacity building and to increase coordination in order to meet the needs from third countries. Indeed cyber capacity building should be policy driven, building on the UN framework for responsible state behaviour, as well as needs driven, building on the expertise of all States involved.

6. In order to further enhance cyber capacity building at the global level, we should increase our international coordination, using organisations such as the Global Forum for Cyber Expertise to bring States together, facilitate the exchange of information on ongoing and planned efforts, best practices and lessons learned.

7. In addition, more coordination should take place between States and stakeholders, noting the significant contribution by private sector and civil society to cyber capacity building, as we also see now happening in support of Ukraine to mitigate the impact of the Russian aggression.

8. The EU is working hard to encourage greater information sharing and transparency between all stakeholders when it comes to cyber capacity building and sees the Cyber Programme of Action as an opportunity to further operationalise the coordination and cooperation.

9. Given the foundational nature of cyber capacity building and its importance, particularly to the developing world, it should remain a key topic on our agenda.

10. Given the urgent needs faced by States, and the rising threats related to malicious ICT activities, the PoA proposal therefore aims to support tailored capacity building based on States’ assessments of their needs, to develop exchanges of best practices and experiences between relevant experts, and to foster meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement in this regard.

11. Under the PoA initiative, the EU and its Member States see the opportunity to establish a dedicated funding mechanism, and enhance coordination between existing instruments, such as the World Bank cybersecurity multi-donor trust fund, in line with the principles set out in paragraph 56 of the OEWG final report.

12. The EU and its Member States see capacity building as one of the main pillars of international cooperation, reducing the attack surface and enhancing the ability of States to address cyber threats.
13. Dear colleagues, we would be happy to also take the opportunity of the physical meeting of the OEWG this week, to step-up our exchange and cooperation on capacity building. Feel free to reach out to us to this end.