Distinguished Delegates,

2 I do not intend to summarise the very rich, varied and interesting discussions we have had over the past week. It has been, as some of you said, a very intense but also a very productive week. I wanted to share with you some reflections from the podium.

3 First, it is true that we had a difficult start to the second substantive session. That is the reality. The second substantive session met in the context of a very challenging international environment. We also began our work in a context where we had not yet agreed modalities for stakeholder participation even though we had met and worked hard during the intersessional period. That framed the beginning of the second substantive session. We heard some very important remarks from Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, who said in her opening remarks that confidence-building measures such as the OEWG are needed not in spite but because of periods of high tension. I too had made the same observation in my opening remarks on Monday. The truth is that we need this platform as a neutral venue for us to engage in dialogue and discussion. If we did not have this platform, we would have needed to invent it. But ironically, even if we were able to invent it, we would not be able to establish a platform like this in the current context. The fact that this platform was established some time ago means that we are fortunate to have such a platform in existence that enables all of us to have the difficult discussions and dialogue that is needed to build trust, confidence and hopefully convergence and consensus around some of the most difficult issues in the area of ICT security.

4 Second, it is also true that there was an underlying sense this week of frustration and disappointment because of the fact that we had not been able to arrive at consensus on modalities for stakeholder participation. There was also some degree of frustration and disappointment that we were not able to meet in the context of a formal meeting as was mandated by our founding General Assembly resolution. This frustration was also expressed by delegations who had travelled long distances from their capitals, and by delegations who felt that precious time had been lost on some of the discussions surrounding the
modalities of our work. I too share these frustrations and disappointment, but I am not pessimistic as we look ahead. As I said, it is precisely at moments like this, during a period of heightened geopolitical tension, that we need an OEWG like this one to discuss issues relating to ICT security.

5 Third, let me give you my views on what we were able to achieve. You all know what we were not able to achieve, which is consensus on modalities for stakeholder participation. On the other hand, let me give you a sense of what I think we were able to achieve this week. First, I think we took a big step on substance and substantive issues under Agenda Item 5. I think it was Canada that said it earlier this afternoon, in describing this session as one of the most substantive sessions of the working group. I would agree with that assessment. We had very detailed and in-depth discussions on Agenda Item 5 on all the sub-items, and there were very detailed, important and interesting ideas that had been put on the table. That in my view is a good step forward and a big step forward with regard to getting on with the work of this Working Group. The other thing that I thought we achieved was that we took a step from the “what” to the “how”. This was a challenge I had put to delegations on Monday. I think we all have a sense of what needs to be done, but the question is how do we do it, how do we take the next step, how do we implement it. In this context, the different proposals that were put forward is really a way of translating the normative framework into action. There is no doubt that we have a framework of norms, rules and principles, which has been adopted and agreed by consensus. This is a very previous asset that we have. But a framework like this needs to be translated into action and implemented. It must make a difference to countries around the world, especially to countries that need the most assistance in terms of building capacity to deal with the challenges posed by ICT security. I and my staff have taken careful notes of the different proposals. We will study them carefully, and if we have questions about some of your proposals we will come back to your delegations. In the meantime, I would also ask you to give further thought to your own proposals, and to encourage you to put forward concept papers. Elaborate the proposals that you have put forward in a way that can be disseminated to all others. Build up on your ideas and the feedback you might have received, and prepare papers which can be uploaded onto the OEWG portal. You can also send your concept papers, proposals or written input to my team and to the Secretariat. I think it is important to get to a level of detail so that the annual progress report can also be equally detailed and implementation-oriented as opposed to being aspirational and conceptual. We need to be action-oriented with a keen eye on getting things implemented. The question of implementation is a very important part of our mandate. How we are able to deliver on the implementation potential of this process will shape the perception as to whether this process is able to deliver results. I said at the beginning of this session on Monday that the expectations are high in terms of
what this process can deliver. Many countries, including smaller countries and developing countries, have come to this process looking for results rather than looking for concepts. They are looking for proposals and projects that will make a difference to them, and looking for a pathway that will help them prepare to deal with the challenges posed by ICT security.

6 My fourth point relates to the question of modalities for stakeholder participation. Before I come to the question of modalities, I’d like to say to all of you that from the moment I took on the post of Chair of this Working Group, I have been clear in my mind that it is important to engage with stakeholders. They are not part of the problem. They are part of the solution. They are needed for the solution that each one of us has to define in our own national context, but they are also part of the solution at the international level. They have the expertise and the resources that are a key part of any solution. We have a framework for capacity-building which was adopted by consensus in the previous OEWG in terms of capacity-building being needs driven and determined by sovereign governments. We have a good framework, but if stakeholders are able and willing to help, I think it is only in our interests that where possible we mobilise all the resources and assistance we can get. They are, and can be, a partner for all of us in this process. In that spirit, I have continued my approach of engaging with stakeholders informally. Prior to this week, on 24 March, I convened an informal virtual engagement with stakeholders which was well-attended. This week, on 31 March, I convened another round of informal engagement with stakeholders which was focussed specifically on the topic of capacity-building. It was a thematic discussion and I think it went quite well. Although the session itself was cut short compared to what I had originally planned, the stakeholders came prepared. They were very focussed. I had prepared guiding questions, and they came prepared to answer those questions. I think it is an asset that we have so many stakeholders who are interested to participate in our process.

7 This leads to my fifth and last point, which is that it is my hope that we will have modalities for stakeholder participation in place before our July session. This week, there have been some very candid conversations about the way forward on stakeholder modalities. I hesitate to characterise or describe the state of consensus or the state of a lack of consensus. But I think the candid conversations we have had this week has given everyone a realistic sense of what the stark options are. The options are not many. It remains my hope that we will be able to agree on modalities in this Working Group before the July session. Based on the conversations that I’ve had and that my team have had, and the feedback we have received from many delegations, it is my intention to continue some of these conversations intersessionally, to explore further options that will help us arrive at a consensual solution for modalities within this
Working Group. That remains my hope. I have already spent the previous intersessional period working on this issue. My track record on this front has not been stellar, but I am going to continue to do my utmost and try my best to facilitate a conversation that needs to take place. Ultimately, it is not a conversation with me, but a conversation between delegations. If it was up to me to impose a solution, that could have been done on 1 June 2021 when I first assumed this post. It is precisely because the mandate of our process requires us to adopt decisions by consensus that we are forced to have difficult conversations between ourselves. As I said, this process is a confidence-building measure in itself, and a confidence-building measure like this one will require us to have very difficult conversations. Listening to each other is part of the process of building confidence or rebuilding confidence. I know that agreement will not be easy, but it is my responsibility as Chair to continue some of these conversations during the intersessional period and I will do so with the hope that we can reach a consensus decision on modalities in time for accreditation to begin for the July meeting. That is my hope.

Distinguished Delegates, I have no further points to make except to thank all of you for all your support and cooperation you have given to me and my team. It has been an intense but very productive week indeed, and I am pleased that we can conclude with our meeting today well before 6pm. I hope it gives you all a little time to catch up with each other, because the pace this week has indeed been frenetic. I hope each one of you will have a wonderful weekend ahead and have some rest before we resume our work in the coming weeks informally, virtually, and intersessionally. With those comments, I thank you once again for your support. The meeting is now adjourned. See you in July.