Distinguished Delegates, I will now make some opening remarks as Chair.

I am happy that we are able to meet here in-person and in the same room. I see many familiar faces and some new faces as well, and I welcome all of you warmly to this meeting. For those who have newly joined this process and for those of you who have travelled from capitals, I am very happy that you are able to join this meeting and I look forward to working closely with all of you. As we begin this second substantive session, I would like to share with you some reflections on where we are now as a process, and the direction I hope that we can collectively take going forward.

First, as we begin our discussions this week, I would like to invite delegations to take a step back and reflect on the broader importance of this process. Many of you will recall that I have said many times before that the OEWG is not just any ordinary meeting or discussion group. Rather, the OEWG is in fact a confidence-building measure (CBM) in itself. This is a point that many other delegations also made at the first substantive session of our Working Group in December 2021. Even more crucially, while there are other examples of CBMs in the domain of ICT security, the OEWG is unique as a CBM because it is universal and inclusive in nature.

Today, we find ourselves in a time of many challenging international developments and we face geopolitical tension. It is not surprising that in times of high tension many CBMs, including the OEWG, will naturally come under immense stress. Yet it is important to remember that it is also precisely in times of high tension that we need CBMs like the OEWG. At this point in time, the fact is that the OEWG is the only international process and the only ICT security CBM that we have at the global level that includes all 193 UN member states, that is open-ended, and that is transparent. This makes the OEWG a very valuable platform that we must all collectively nurture and protect. The success of the OEWG is crucial not only because of what we can potentially achieve within the OEWG but also because of what our work here ultimately represents. Crucially, the active participation of all your countries in the OEWG sends a strong signal that, despite our differences and despite the challenges we face, or as Under-
Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu put it, because of the challenges that we are facing, it is important for the international community to send the signal that we are committed to working together to strengthen ICT security and enhance stability in cyberspace.

5 Second, against this broader picture, the second substantive session that begins today is significant because it is both a test and a signal of our collective commitment to build upon the good work of the international community in the area of ICT security. Over the last twenty years, there have been a series of meetings, six GGEs, one other OEWG, and multiple UN General Assembly resolutions. We have a clear foundation of results, and the international community has set out an initial framework of norms, rules, and principles for responsible state behaviour in cyberspace that has been accepted and endorsed by consensus by the UN General Assembly. This is a precious foundation we must protect and build upon. For us to successfully continue this work, it is imperative that we build on the solid discussions we had at our first substantive session in December. I think delegations will agree that our session in December was a good start to this process. In December, many delegations came with concrete ideas, and engaged in a substantive and productive discussion. These discussions give us a solid foundation to build on this week. We now need to build on this positive momentum to make further progress. There are already several concrete ideas on the table from our December discussions. These ideas, in my view, are a good basis for further discussion, and I hope that delegations will work together to sharpen these ideas and bring these ideas to fruition. Furthermore, I am also happy to hear that several delegations have come prepared this week with additional ideas and proposals for this session. I look forward to hearing these new ideas too. Looking ahead, I would like to encourage delegations who have put forward ideas to go one step further by further elaborating their ideas by putting forward specific elements of their proposal either in writing or through their national statements. I hope that these proposals can spur further progress by forming the basis for the drafting of our annual progress report.

6 Third, it is also important for us to make progress as there are very high expectations among delegations from all parts of the world for this process to deliver concrete outcomes. Member States, including many developing countries and small countries, are anticipating what that this Working Group can deliver results for them. I have heard this repeatedly in my informal consultations with many delegations. You can tell by this very crowded conference room that many delegations, including many smaller delegations, are represented here. They are here to participate constructively but also in the expectation that there will be results from this process. Many have observed that, against the odds, the first OEWG agreed on a consensus report, representing the first time that all Member States collectively reached a global understanding on international ICT security.
The expectation therefore is there for us now to build on that understanding, to implement the recommendations, and to continue discussing the elements that have yet to garner consensus. Beyond Member States, individuals and organisations around the world are also watching to see what the OEWG can achieve. There are numerous non-state actors at the frontlines of ICT security. These actors, ranging from private businesses and industry associations to non-governmental organisations and academic researchers, are currently doing a huge amount of good work to advance ICT security. But it is clear that these frontline actors cannot protect cyberspace alone. It is important to them that Member States and the international community do our part to elaborate a comprehensive global understanding on ICT security by building on the foundation of norms, rules and principles that we have already agreed. At the core, what we decide in this group will have important implications for the international community. Through this OEWG, it is important that the international community speaks with a clear voice to provide direction and guidance for these actors as they continue their crucial work. It is my hope that our Working Group will deliver on all these expectations through leadership by example. I know that your delegations have invested time and energy in this process, and many of your representatives have travelled long distances to attend this session this week, because you believe that this process has the potential to deliver concrete results for your countries and for the international community. It is our responsibility in this Working Group to set out the way forward for all actors, both state and non-state alike, so that we can all fully benefit from the potential of ICTs while mitigating the risks that cyber threats pose to international peace and security.

7 Fourth, I am approaching this session with a view to identifying suitable elements for inclusion in our annual progress report. I would like to recall that in accordance with UN General Assembly resolution 75/240, we are required to submit for adoption, by consensus, an annual progress report. I hope we can adopt the annual progress report at the third substantive session which is scheduled in July 2022. Thereafter, it is my hope that the annual progress report can be submitted to the First Committee. The annual progress report is an important part of our process as our hard work here in this Working Group will only be tangible if we can record the progress we have made. One possibility is to work towards a fairly short and succinct report that captures key elements of consensus on concrete and specific ideas that we can decisively move forward on. In this regard, my aim and hope is to produce an annual progress report that supports our vision of an action-oriented and results-focused Working Group.

8 My fifth point is that, in line with my intention to capture specifics and concrete ideas, I specifically hope that delegations will make further progress at this substantive session by moving from the “what” to the “how”. In December, I recall that many delegations identified “what” needed to be done across the
different sub-topics in the OEWG’s mandate. That is an important task which our Working Group has achieved. But we cannot stop there. Now I would like to go deeper by focussing on how we can achieve what needs to be done. That is the challenge I am asking delegations to reflect on as we kick off this second substantive session. In this spirit, I hope delegations will take up some of the ideas raised in December and develop those ideas further, and in this way work together to increase our common understanding of the many ideas that have been put forward.

6 Sixth and finally, I would like to give delegations an update on the important issue of modalities for the participation of stakeholders in the OEWG. Delegations would be aware that the Working Group has spent many hours and much energy on this issue. As Chair of the Working Group I have spent the last nine months to working on this issue, devoting as much time as possible. My sense is that while no delegation has disagreed with the necessity for the Working Group to engage interested stakeholders, delegations have been unable to agree on the specific form such engagement with stakeholders should take. On my part, as Chair of the process, I have been clear right from the beginning, that it is of utmost importance for this Working Group to have systematic, sustained and substantive stakeholder engagement. Therefore, reaching consensus on modalities is crucial to the realization of this vision. In this regard, I believe it is my responsibility as Chair to continue to do my utmost to facilitate a consensus solution. I am organising an informal meeting tomorrow, Tuesday 29 March 2022, at lunchtime to further discuss this issue. This is something I had mentioned to delegations during our virtual open-ended informal meeting two weeks ago. The current situation is unfortunate, and it is not something that makes me happy. Nonetheless, despite the efforts of all of us in this Working Group over the last nine months, we are no closer to consensus than we were when we started. There were several ideas that were discussed, specific ideas, but they were not able to garner consensus. I believe that it is important to say at this point that a compromise is possible, but it has to be something that will enjoy the support of all delegations. But we will also require all delegations to show flexibility in order to arrive at a consensus. As Chair of this Working Group, I remain fully committed to continuing my work this week on the issue of stakeholder modalities, even as we continue discussions on substance. Ultimately, I am in your hands, and I look forward to receiving your guidance and support as we continue discussions on modalities for stakeholder participation.

7 Once again, let me thank all of you for your participation and constructive approach, and I thank you for your presence at this session.