

STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA TO THE FIRST SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE OPEN ENDED WORKING GROUP ON SECURITY OF AND IN THE USE OF ICTS (December 2021)

General Exchange of Views

Previous GGE reports (from 2010, 2013 and 2015) – all of which have been adopted, by consensus, by the UN General Assembly – provided our basis for discussions at the first OEWG.

These reports set out the international community's expectations by providing a framework for what countries should and should not do in cyberspace.

The universal recognition and reaffirmation of that framework in the consensus 2021 OEWG report is a significant achievement.

The consensus 2021 GGE report built upon our collective commitment to the framework of responsible state behaviour, beginning a process of capturing our collective experience and best practice already being implemented in the day-to-day work of our cybersecurity agencies and technical communities.

Australia reaffirms our commitment to act in accordance with these reports in their entirety, and our commitment to act in accordance with international law – including the UN Charter in its entirety - as well as the norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace.

We encourage other countries to likewise be transparent and unequivocal in their commitment to act in accordance with these agreed rules of the road: transparency breeds accountability, predictability and stability.

The significant work of the past two years, captured in the 2021 OEWG and GGE reports, should not remain words on a page.

Already, countries and organisations are taking those texts and recommendations, and working to operationalise them.

Turning those words on a page into concrete actions, and into guidance on how states can identify emerging cyber threats, understand the impacts of malicious cyber activity, and address these threats responsibly and comprehensively – Australia considers this to be imperative to our core

mandate in this OEWG – that is, promoting and protecting international peace and security in cyberspace.

The pillars of our framework – international law, norms, and CBMs, supported by capacity building – are intrinsically linked reinforcing.

It is only by adhering to the commitments we have made, by implementation supported by coordinated and targeted capacity building to ensure all states are in a position to adhere to those commitments, and through greater accountability when they are broken, that we can make progress towards a more open, secure, stable, and peaceful cyberspace, and be in a position to face the known and unknown threats that our global community will face in the future.

We must look forward, not backward, with the tools at our disposal, and work to pivot and utilise our framework for responsible state behaviour to overcome the threats of the future.

This should form the basis for our substantive work. There is much to be done, but we have the time and space to make significant progress.

Before I conclude, I want to touch briefly on a few procedural matters.

Australia is committed to inclusive discussions. Inclusivity means ensuring a diversity of perspectives and experiences are represented.

Diversity comes in many forms.

Geographic diversity remains difficult as pandemic travel restrictions fluctuate.

Many colleagues, particularly from my home region, the Indo-Pacific, were not able to travel here today, and are unable to participate from home.

I hope we can be flexible in our future working methods to ensure the greatest geographical participation possible.

As mentioned by Ambassador Lauber yesterday, the unprecedented gender parity enjoyed by some sessions of the 2019-21 OEWG substantially contributed to its progress, success, and ambition.

The continuation of the women in Cyber fellowship, including those fellows present here today from Latin America, ASEAN and the Pacific, is one tangible measure towards inclusivity.

As mentioned yesterday, Australia remains a strong supporter of meaningful multistakeholder engagement in the OEWG, and mechanisms that facilitates an ongoing conversation between states and non-state parties.

We are confident in your guidance towards an acceptable solution on this point, and will provide comment.

Continuing our good work towards diversity and inclusion will only enrich our conversation and help us better understand where we can find commonalities.

Finally, Chair,

The 2021 OEWG's success should not be taken for granted – many of those here today, and many who could not be here today, worked incredibly hard to find compromise and consensus.

We should not underestimate the effort that will be required by us all to make further progress – the issues we are here to discuss are contentious and complex – but also critical.

There are many things we disagree about – but I believe we are all here because we know that, in the face of future threats, progress is our only option.

This is a topic of great importance to us all, and Australia is committed, and optimistic, that we can collectively advance responsible state behaviour in cyberspace.

The Chair has Australia's full support; and we stand ready to assist.