



APC statement at the dedicated stakeholder session at the Third Substantive Session of the Open-ended Working Group on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security 2021-2025

27 July 2022

Delivered by Verónica Ferrari, APC Global Policy Advocacy Coordinator

Distinguished Chair, colleagues,

My name is Verónica Ferrari and I speak on behalf of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC). APC is an international civil society organisation and a network of members working for peace, human rights, development and protection of the environment, through the strategic use of digital technologies.¹

APC welcomes the opportunity to engage in this discussion.

In our intervention, we will focus on some aspects of the draft report connected with capacity building and on the guiding question on the ways in which civil society organizations such as APC are involved in supporting and delivering capacity-building initiatives.

Firstly, we welcome the inclusion of language in the draft report connected with narrowing the digital divide. Gaps in terms of internet access and digital skills should be seen as security concerns since they are factors that create differential vulnerabilities to cyber attacks.

We also welcome and support the recommendation of mainstreaming the capacity-building principles adopted in 2021. In particular, we welcome the recommendation to States to continue

¹www.apc.org

to addressing the gender dimensions of ICT security. It has been encouraging to see this week a growing number of states calling for a gender approach to international cybersecurity.

We support the recognition that non-governmental stakeholders are already playing an important role in capacity building. For example civil society organizations as APC play a key role in:

- Bringing a human rights and gender perspective to national cybersecurity strategies. APC is now conducting research on how to better incorporate a gender perspective in cybersecurity national policies and will soon launch a framework to assist policy makers in doing that.
- Developing tailored trainings for women's rights activists so they can use the internet safely. APC's Feminist Tech Exchange (FTX) seeks to be a feminist contribution to the global response to digital security capacity building.
- Convening stakeholders and designing training that responds to local contexts. The African School on Internet Governance (AfriSIG) is another APC capacity-building initiative whose goal is to strengthen the capacities of African leaders to participate in local and international internet discussions. AfriSIG is designed, developed and run by colleagues in and from Africa, together with partners such as the African Union, Research ICT Africa and Global Partners Digital. The focus of this year's AfriSIG was precisely on international cybersecurity and capacity-building needs in Africa.²

To conclude, we support the call for strengthening cooperation between states and non-governmental stakeholders in capacity building and the proposal of an action-oriented Programme of Action that could help states in this regard. A human rights and a gender approach to cybersecurity means, among other issues, ensuring ample and meaningful participation of multiple stakeholders in all aspects of cyber discussions.

Thank you for your attention and we look forward to continuing engaging in this process.

²<https://afrisig.org/afrisig-2022>