Joint Position of the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Cuba, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Nicaragua, the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on the draft annual progress report of the Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the Use of ICTs 2021-2025

We, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Cuba, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Nicaragua, the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, with a view to ensuring successful outcome of the Group’s activities by developing a balanced annual progress report containing voluntary, non-binding recommendations, request to reflect in the draft document the following.

1) The draft report should be concise and oriented towards a consensus approach. It should reflect the general outcome of discussions and provide guidelines for future work. Due to the differences in positions of States, elaborating too detailed recommendations is yet premature at this stage.

2) As for the substance, we would like to include in the text provisions on:

- Ensuring protection of sovereignty of States against threats in the use of ICTs as well as non-discriminatory access to modern ICTs with respect to different national realities, capacities and levels of development of States and refraining from any unilateral coercive measures in violation of the UN Charter mindful of the fact that such illegal measures have a direct impact in terms of access to ICTs;

- Developing new rules, norms and principles of responsible behaviour of States in the use of ICTs, including legally binding ones, in addition to the existing initial set of 13 voluntary norms;

- Ensuring that information space is used for peaceful purposes only; therefore, we do not support inclusion of provisions on international humanitarian law in the draft report;

- Elaborating legally binding obligations, including an international legal instrument to regulate the use of ICTs;

- Developing universal terminology in the use of ICTs;
- Developing and implementing globally interoperable common rules and standards for supply chain and data security;
- Safeguarding the general availability, secure and stable functioning of the Internet as well as ensuring equal participation of States in the governance of this work;
- Establishing a UN directory of Points of Contact as well as facilitating direct communication between competent authorities of States;
- Ensuring fair and depoliticized capacity-building with attention to the needs and national security interests of sovereign developing countries;
- Considering the possibility of establishing a specific fund/assistance program in the field of capacity-building to provide technical assistance on a fair and depoliticized basis for developing states aimed at overcoming the “digital divide” (according to the experience of other UN targeted programs);
- Continuing the negotiation process on security of and in the use of ICTs within a single negotiating mechanism under the UN auspices on this issue, namely the OEWG.

3) References to reporting on implementation (including, inter alia, surveys and checklists) should be voluntary. States should not be forced to report on the issues that have not been consensually agreed upon under the UN auspices. The aforementioned accountability will be strengthened only when legally binding agreements are achieved.

4) While acknowledging the value of expertise provided by other interested stakeholders, the draft report should state that the OEWG is an intergovernmental process. States have exclusive prerogative of decision-making.