

Intervention by the EU Institute for Security Studies

6th meeting of the OEWG

27 July 2022

Second set of questions

Mr Chair,

Esteemed Delegates,

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this discussion.

For the sake of time, I will keep my intervention brief. We will provide a more detailed written submission on the draft progress report to the Secretariat.

The discussion on the draft progress report is already quite advanced and many concrete recommendations and comments were already made by national delegations, so I will focus just on two main points: one editorial and one substantive. My substantive point is a recommendation to include a reference to informal diplomacy under the section devoted to confidence-building measures and I will come back to this in a minute.

Regarding the editorial comment, there are several references in the text to “interested stakeholders”. To paraphrase the Australian delegate: there is no requirement for States to be interested, so we believe that there should not be one for non-state actors either. Therefore, we would suggest replacing “interested” with “relevant” or simply leaving the notion of “stakeholders”. We believe that in line with the whole-of-society approach, states have an active duty to seek out relevant stakeholders and engage them.

Moving to the substantial comment, we very much welcome the mention of expertise and the calls on several occasions for the involvement of experts on various topics to contribute to the discussion. Evidence-based policy making grounded in research is an important mechanism to moderate the risk of breakdown of diplomacy, on the one hand, and a mechanism to prevent a stalemate in a highly polarised political environment, on the other hand. Therefore, we regret that many excellent research institutes and non-governmental organisations with whom the EUISS has worked for years, have seen their requests for accreditation rejected, and hence they cannot contribute to this process.

Since our discussion concerns questions of international security, I would like to submit for your consideration, Mr Chair, the **inclusion in the progress report of references to the role of informal diplomacy**, often referred to as track 1.5 and track 2 dialogues involving governments and other groups of stakeholders. For instance, the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) provides an informal mechanism for scholars, officials and others in their private capacities to discuss political and security issues and challenges facing the region, including through the CSCAP Study Group on International Law and Cyberspace.

The EU Institute for Security Studies, together with the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Xiamen University and the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, has been involved in the Sino-European Expert Working Group on International Law in Cyberspace, supported by the EU, Switzerland, the Netherlands and China, which helped to improve understanding of our respective positions.

Such meetings have provided both policy-makers and the research community with an opportunity to quietly engage, raise awareness and clarify views on issues related to cyberspace, ICTs and international security with counterparts in other states.

Moreover, such engagements reflect a political will on the part of national leaders and research communities to reduce the risk of misunderstandings and, potentially, conflict escalation.

In this light, we suggest including in the section devoted to confidence-building the following new recommendation:

States, on a voluntary basis, are encouraged to promote and support informal diplomacy channels involving relevant stakeholders from non-governmental organisations, research, and academia, with the aim to promote dialogue and contribute to reducing the risk of escalation or conflict in cyberspace. States are encouraged to share information about such dialogues.

Should there be no consensus regarding this provision at this stage, I would like to request that this topic is addressed during the subsequent sessions of the OEWG.

We will also share with the Secretariat the report on informal diplomacy published by the EU Cyber Diplomacy Initiative, which the EUISS coordinates.

Thank you, Mr Chair.