UK comments on Rev1 of the first annual progress report of the OEWG on security of and in the use of ICTs 2021-2025

UK statement delivered on 27 July

We support the statement of a group of States delivered by Switzerland on International Law, the proposal by the Netherlands and the focus on capacity building in this section.

We should delete the reference to “due diligence” at 9a. It is a separate topic from State responsibility, and is considered under the 11 norms in previous reports. We welcome the reference to International Humanitarian Law and support Brazil’s wording ‘observers’.

At 9c ‘criteria for unlawful ICT activities by different States’ should be replaced with the consensus wording ‘common understandings of how international law applies to the use of ICTs by States’. The paragraph should end here. We do not support the inclusion of a reference to mutual legal assistance.

We support the concept at 10a of a POC directory for urgent situations and interacting effectively with existing directories. We do not engage in the provision of ‘hotlines’ on this or other issues. We do not understand how a directory can ‘respect State sovereignty’.

We must retain the intention of the consensus language on ICT capabilities at 10b.

Cooperation between CERTs at 10d is important. To address this proposal would require input from the Global Forum of Incident Response Teams, or FIRST, who are currently not accredited to participate in the OEWG. We reiterate that the OEWG is not a technical forum.

As US and India, we do not support the inclusion of language on non-discriminatory environment and economic development at 10e or elsewhere.

Recommendation 6 should end after ‘…foster confidence building’ in order to avoid limiting discussion at the proposed inter-sessional meeting.

We welcome the promotion of better understanding of capacity building needs and the need to ensure Member States are better informed.

It is vital language around ‘use of ICTs’ in section F must be standardised to reflect our mandate. Our mandate to develop capacity to mitigate threats is weakened and marginalised in this report when it should be at the heart of our work. The 2021 OEWG report did not propose ‘principles of ICT capacity-building’ but of ‘capacity building in relation to State use of ICTs in the context of international security’. Diluting our focus here would be a mistake we would regret in due course.

We support the Pacific Island Forum proposal for wording at 11a. We cannot support the use of the word ‘ICT domain’ in this report, which should be replaced with ‘ICT environment’.

The second sentence of 11g should end after ‘partnerships with States’ as the examples of stakeholder activity provided are unnecessarily limited.
We fully support the Chairs proposal to engage in focused discussions on this topic. Member States have put forward ideas to enable the OEWG to shape the role of the UN in this area. They must be properly considered and aligned in a holistic approach, including how they relate to the work of existing UN organisations, and to the concepts in recommendation 2 and 4 of a permanent mechanism and focal point.

We should delete recommendation 4 and amend recommendation 2 as follows: “… (b) mechanisms a permanent mechanism, potentially within the UN, and in collaboration and coordination with other existing initiatives, to promote for exchanging views and ideas related to capacity-building on security in the use of ICTs, at the fourth and fifth sessions of the OEWG, and ...”.

We should delete the final sentence of para 12a as it does not garner consensus.