First session of the Open-ended Working Group on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security

Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

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Thank you, Ambassador Lauber.

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by extending once again my congratulations to Ambassador Lauber on his election as Chair of this Open-ended Working Group on developments in the use of information and telecommunications in the context of international security. I am fully confident that Ambassador Lauber’s extensive diplomatic experience and deep wisdom make him the right person to guide this very critical process.

Ambassador Lauber, please allow me to personally assure you of the Secretariat’s utmost support. I would also like to take the opportunity to highlight that this process, as well as the Group of Governmental Experts, is also supported by a team from the UN Institute for Disarmament Research, “UNIDIR”: Ms. Kerstin Vignard, Mr. Jim Lewis, Ms. Camino Kavanagh and Mr. Anton Shingarev.

Distinguished delegates,

As you commence your vital work on an issue that is increasingly central to our collective security, I would like to highlight three points on the road ahead.

Firstly, the Open-ended Working Group is an important opportunity that comes at a vital time.

We live in a time of global interconnectivity. The malicious use of Information and Telecommunications Technologies has therefore – almost inevitably – become a broadly shared concern. Characterized by a trend of increasing frequency and severity, malicious ICT-incidents continue to undermine trust between States and pose a significant threat to international peace and security.

This Open-ended Working Group, established by the General Assembly last year, provides an invaluable opportunity for all Member States to collectively take forward discussions and to reach common understandings on the use of ICTs in the context of international security.
At the same time, it is a challenging task that lies ahead. States have a significant responsibility to make progress on this important issue.

I therefore call on all Member States to engage in this process in a constructive spirit, to share perspectives on the threats faced in the ICT-environment, and to work together in putting forward ideas to promote an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful ICT environment.

While States are in the lead in these discussions, I believe that other actors, including the private sector, civil society and academia, also have an important role to play.

I had hoped that non-governmental organizations both with ECOSOC consultative status and those without would be able to participate as observers in this meeting of the Open-ended Working Group. Although that did not transpire, I am glad that the non-governmental organizations with ECOSOC consultative status are at this meeting today.

In this context, I would like to highlight the unique opportunity presented by the mandate of this Group to hold an informal intersessional consultative meeting with business, non-governmental organizations and academia. This meeting will take place from 2 to 4 December this year and I urge all Member States to encourage their national private sector, civil society and academia to participate in this consultative meeting so that the voices of all those with a stake in this issue can be heard.

Secondly, there is already a foundation of work on which this process can build.

Since 2004, there have been five Groups of Governmental Experts or “GGEs” established to study the issue of developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security. Three of these Groups have produced substantive reports, which include important assessments of the challenges facing us in the ICT-environment and recommendations on how to address them.

The deliberations of the Open-ended Working Group should be informed by the GGE’s assessments and recommendations on existing and emerging threats; how international law applies in the use of ICTs; voluntary norms of responsible State behaviour; and confidence and capacity-building measures.

In this context, I should highlight that the General Assembly, through resolution 70/237, has called upon all Member States to be guided in their use of ICTs by the 2015 GGE report.
Many efforts have already been undertaken by States and other actors to implement the GGE recommendations. Whether at the national, regional or global level, initiatives around the world support these recommendations. I therefore also encourage you to make use in your deliberations of the many practical insights offered by this body of work from around the globe.

Distinguished delegates,

My third point relates to the relationship between the Open-ended Working Group and the Group of Governmental Experts.

As you are aware, two intergovernmental processes on international ICT-security were established by the General Assembly last year. One is this Open-ended Working Group process, and the other is a sixth Group of Governmental Experts. The GGE has elected Ambassador Guilherme Patriota of Brazil as its Chair, and the Group will convene for its first substantive session in December this year.

I would like to commend the Chairs of both the Open-ended Working Group and the GGE for already taking the initiative to coordinate their work.

I believe it is paramount that the two processes work in close complementarity with each other.

I ask that all Member States find creative ways whereby each Group can approach particular substantive issues to avoid duplication of work, but nevertheless deliver on their respective mandates.

In closing, I would like to wish Ambassador Lauber and all of you every success as you begin this important endeavour.

The task ahead requires creativity, flexibility, and a collaborative spirit. Be mindful that true success in strengthening our collective international ICT security depends on success in both the Open-ended Working Group and the GGE.

Please be assured that the Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to support you throughout this journey.

Thank you.