Informal Consultations of the Group of Governmental Experts on
Advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace in the context of
international security

Opening remarks by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu
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New York
5 December 2019
Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by extending my congratulations to Ambassador Guilherme Patriota on his election as Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international security. I am fully confident that Ambassador Patriota’s extensive diplomatic experience and deep expertise make him the right person to guide this important process.

Distinguished delegates,

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

Firstly, the urgency of the issue of cyber security.

The malicious use of cyberspace continues unabated, undermining trust between States and posing significant risks to international peace and security.

Secretary-General Guterres has stressed that in cyberspace we collectively face the triune risks of a digital divide; a social divide; and a political divide.

This is why he has made cybersecurity a priority. In his Agenda for Disarmament, he made a commitment to work with Member States to foster a culture of accountability and adherence to emerging norms, rules and principles on responsible behaviour in cyberspace.

He also established an independent High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation, co-chaired by Melinda Gates and Jack Ma. The Panel’s report, issued in June of this year, contains ideas on how to harness key opportunities and address the challenges facing us in the digital sphere.
As evidenced by the highly interactive substantive discussions between almost 100 delegations and 114 non-governmental organizations at the informal intersessional meeting of the Open-ended Working Group earlier this week, cyber security is an issue that the wider global community is also very much seized with.

My second point is that both of the parallel intergovernmental processes should be seen as an important opportunity.

As you are aware, two intergovernmental processes on international ICT-security were established by the General Assembly last year: One, the Group of Governmental Experts, chaired by Ambassador Patriota, and the other, the Open-ended Working Group process, chaired by Ambassador Jürg Lauber of Switzerland, which commenced its work in September this year.

While some see having two different tracks as a potential challenge, I believe it presents a special opportunity and should be welcomed.

The Open-ended Working Group affords the opportunity for all UN Member States to discuss cyber security collectively, and just as importantly, it provided the historic opportunity of holding an intersessional consultative meeting engaging all stakeholders, not only States, which took place earlier this week.

At the same time, the GGE process has, and will continue to contribute greatly to the furthering and deepening of cyber discussions as well.

The GGE has undertaken its work in 5 previous iterations since 2004, and therefore has a history of in-depth consideration of the issue, which have yielded three successful consensus reports on

1. Existing and emerging cyber threats;
2. The application of international law in the use of ICTs;
3. Voluntary norms of responsible State behavior; and
4. A comprehensive set of measures for confidence-building and capacity-building.

In 2015, the General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution 70/237 which called upon all UN Member States to be guided in their use of ICTs by the 2015 GGE report.
Both processes therefore bring unique features, and can both contribute to taking forward the global agenda on international ICT security.

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 in this regard.

**As my final point, I would like to encourage all States to engage fully in both processes.**

In September this year, the positive engagement of States at the first substantive session of the Open-ended Working Group was highly commendable. Clearly the issue of ICT security is an important one for many delegations.

Likewise, I encourage you now to engage also with the GGE process. The current GGE format is unique in that it foresees informal consultative meetings with all UN Member States so that they can engage in interactive discussions and share their views on the work of the GGE. It also mandates engagement with States at the regional level.

I urge you to make full use of both the regional consultations, as well as the informal consultations taking place over the next two days, to provide your views to the GGE.

Distinguished delegates,

It is in the hands of States how they wish to take forward both the GGE and the Open-ended Working Group. I hope that you will engage fully in both processes in order to leverage on the strengths of each and take advantage of the plurality of venues and views.

It is my hope that States will do their utmost to steer both processes to successful outcomes that serve to promote an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful ICT environment.

Please be assured that the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the UN Institute for Disarmament Research stand ready to support you in your endeavour.

Thank you and I wish you successful consultations ahead.