Czechia’s submission to the UN Secretary General’s call for contributions to a report under resolution 78/237 “Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security” adopted by the General Assembly on 22 December 2023 (note verbale of UNODA: ODA/2024-002/)

Czechia is fully committed to advancing the global debate on cybersecurity in the UN and is grateful for the progress made so far by both the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) and the UN Group of Governmental Experts (UNGGE).

One of the key achievements of OEWG and UNGGE is that they have developed and consolidated a framework for responsible State behaviour in cyberspace.

In this context, Czechia believes that the implementation of the framework for responsible State behaviour in cyberspace should be the central theme of the future institutional dialogue. Furthermore, Czechia supports the establishment of a permanent, single-track, inclusive and action-oriented mechanism under the auspices of the UN upon the conclusion of the current OEWG in 2025.

At the same time, we believe that in order to establish a future institutional dialogue that would work effectively for the benefit of us all, it is important to continue the debate on its concrete form within the current OEWG. Currently, we as an international community have just over a year to conduct this debate.

With the regard to the debate within the OEWG, Czechia would like to draw your attention to the fact that the most developed, discussed and also consensual proposal for a future institutional dialogue is the initiative "Programme of Action to advance responsible State behaviour in the use of ICTs" (PoA).

In contrast, we believe that resolution 78/237, "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security", does not build on the incremental approach and consensus reached in the OEWG in recent years. It appears to prioritize the interests of a narrow group of States.

The PoA debate has been ongoing continuously since 2020, and Czechia has been actively involved in it. We recognise the value of the ongoing discussion on the PoA within the OEWG in shaping the direction of the PoA and in clarifying a number of potentially controversial points. We believe it is important to continue this debate to define the content and modalities of the future mechanism. In light of the above, we suggest that intersessional meetings and dedicated sessions of the OEWG should be organised in 2024 and 2025 to focus on particular aspects of the PoA, including the budgetary implications.

In addition, Czechia would like to draw attention to certain aspects of the PoA that emerged from the discussion about the PoA and that Czechia considers to be the most significant advantages of the PoA.

- The PoA would bring institutional stability to the international debate regarding ICTs. PoA would represent a permanent institutional framework underpinning all cyber
related debates within the UN. This would avoid the need for periodic discussions about establishing a new working group dedicated to the use of ICTs.

- The PoA would support the implementation of the framework of responsible State behaviour and enable further discussion on the framework’s development, if necessary.
- The PoA would work to operationalise capacity-building principles as part of its action-oriented objectives and foster implementation within cyber capacity-building projects. The PoA could potentially leverage existing and potential capacity-building efforts, increase their visibility and improve their coordination. For example, it might be beneficial to explore coordination with cyber capacity building activities undertaken in other venues such as the ITU.
- The PoA would facilitate meaningful participation and collaboration with non-governmental stakeholders. Engaging the private sector, academia and civil society would bring valuable expertise on matters such as threat assessment, the norms implementation including measurement of progress made, etc.
- The PoA is designed to serve as a comprehensive framework, potentially encompassing other initiatives that have been discussed or agreed upon within the OEWG.

With regard to the specific modalities, Czechia is in favour of the idea of annual plenary sessions and specialized technical working groups’ meetings in the intersessional period.

- The creation and termination of a particular working group would be entirely within the competence of states.
- The scope and preparatory work of these technical discussions would be limited to topics identified in plenary sessions and would be attended, for example, by a limited number of experts from governments and, when relevant, from other stakeholders such as academia. In particular, these working groups could focus on topics such as protection of critical infrastructure, cyber incident response, applicability of concrete provisions of specific issues under international law in cyberspace, etc.
- If this set up well, we believe that having intersessional technical working groups can make our work significantly more efficient and also reduce the burden on individual delegations.
- It might be beneficial to consider holding not all intersessional working group meetings in New York, but to discuss other locations as well.

Prague, 30th April 2024