Submission of IRELAND

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

Ref: note verbale of UNODA: ODA/2024-002/

As an open society with a highly interconnected, digitalised economy, Ireland is acutely conscious of the deteriorating international security environment, particularly with regard to the increase in malicious cyber activities. Recognising this, we have taken action domestically, and with our EU partners, to increase resilience, build our capacity to identify, prevent and deter threats, and to promote a global, open and secure cyberspace with international law and human rights at its core.

However, we have been unambiguous in our position that the global nature of the challenge requires a comprehensive international response. Ireland supported, and was encouraged by, the consensus development of the UN Normative Framework of Responsible State Behaviour in the use of ICTs. The framework was a crucial product of multiple consensus recommendations from both the UN Group of Governmental Experts (2010, 2013, 2015 and 2021), and the UN Open-ended Working Group (2021). The two most recent consensus Annual Progress Reports of the OEWG 2021-2025 also endorsed the framework.

Last year, Ireland published its national position supporting the application in international law in cyberspace, one of the four pillars of the Normative Framework. Ireland is committed to working with other EU Member States and international partners to act in accordance with the Normative Framework and to promote peace and stability through its implementation globally.

Ireland believes that the implementation and enhancement of the Normative Framework is essential to the maintenance of international security in cyberspace, and should therefore be central to any mechanism for regular institutional
dialogue. The proposed future framework for regular institutional dialogue that may follow the present OEWG, as envisioned specifically in proposals for a Programme of Action (PoA), recognises that the Normative Framework is essential, and allows for periodic review conferences to examine the framework.

Ireland has consistently given its full support to the particular approach to regular institutional dialogue for ICT security as advocated by the Programme of Action (PoA), which proposes an inclusive and action-orientated mechanism for a permanent future dialogue. The PoA approach would provide for a permanent, regionally-inclusive, multi-stakeholder and transparent dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations. Widespread support for the PoA, as set out in resolutions of the First Committee of the UN General Assembly has been consistently in evidence, both at the OEWG’s deliberations and through the votes of a broad and regionally diverse group of states at the UNGA.

Ensuring all States can harness the benefits of ICTs, while mitigating the risks through capacity building measures, is a key pillar of the Normative Framework, and a priority for Ireland. It is incumbent upon States to narrow the digital divides and build resilience to malicious cyber activities.

The First Committee resolution 78/237 - “Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security” does not reflect the significance of the Normative Framework, or the broad range of perspectives voiced by many member states, and therefore Ireland was unable to support it. Ireland does not believe that the approach proposed in this resolution can provide for the needs of the majority of UN Member States. In fact, Ireland has concluded that the resolution may serve to undermine the incremental and consensus-based method through which the OEWG has been able to make progress over the past years.

Ireland remains hopeful for the establishment by consensus of a future mechanism for future regular institutional dialogue before the end of the current OEWG, and will work with all states to promote an inclusive, action-oriented model that reflects the Normative Framework.

Discussions on how the PoA approach in particular could be organised have included proposals for annual formal sessions, with open-ended detailed discussions and technical meetings on specific policy issues throughout the year. Technical groups could address issues such as gender, digital divides and the role
of non-governmental entities in the implementation of the Normative Framework. Technical work streams should be voluntary, open to all states, and result in operational conclusions grounded in the lessons learned from the implementation of the Normative Framework.

Building on the trans-regional support for First Committee resolutions that have advocated for a PoA approach, this particular mechanism could enhance regional engagement and cooperation with regional organisations to support needs-based capacity building.

Encouragingly, the PoA as proposed would also allow for formal participation and regular consultations with relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, academia and civil society, to input on relevant issues. Ireland strongly favours multi-stakeholder participation in regular institutional dialogue, firmly believing that it will better focus efforts on supporting States in implementing the framework for responsible state behaviour and of needs-driven capacity building to increase cyber resilience.

In order to have a fully operational regular institutional dialogue by the end of the term of the OEWG, Ireland supports the organisation of intersessional meetings and dedicated sessions of the OEWG in 2024 and 2025, including on budgetary implications.

Permanent Mission of Ireland to the UN
1 May, 2024