

**Joint statement by *the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Burundi, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Nicaragua, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela* on the final draft of the annual progress report of the Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the Use of ICTs 2021-2025**

**New York, 27 July 2023**

Mr. Chair,

We would like to express our appreciation for the effort put by Your Excellency and your team into developing the final draft report. While there have been some improvements compared to the previous version, we must acknowledge the presence of significant drawbacks that are not acceptable to our delegations.

Firstly, the draft report is still, to a large extent, devoted to the implementation of rules, norms and principles of responsible behaviour of states in the use of ICTs, while ignoring the priority task to further develop these norms. It is concerning that references to the latter have not been added, but removed from some paragraphs. This clearly contradicts the mandate of the OEWG as enshrined in the UNGA resolution 75/240 and supported by consensus of all states in the UNGA resolution 76/19. The balance should be ensured.

Furthermore, we note that the report lacks any reference to the initiative on a legally binding instrument, which we believe is an important aspect to be addressed. In this regard our countries strongly object an attempt to eradicate any reference to the concept of a UN convention on international information security cosponsored by Belarus, DPRK, Nicaragua, Russia, Syria and Venezuela, submitted as an official document of the 77th UNGA session. We insist on the need to reflect this important proposal in the final APR.

Equally troubling is the lack of reference to the chair's summary of the previous OEWG, which holds substantial merit and should have served as a valuable foundation for the current OEWG's work.

Another concern consists in the deletion capacity-building-related language across sections of the report. This risks undermining the significance of capacity-building and its potential to address critical challenges.

Moreover, we are disappointed by the inclusion of language on human rights, international humanitarian law, as well as the overemphasis on gender issues, despite clear disagreement of like-minded delegations. Such contentious topics should not have been incorporated without achieving a consensus.

We would also appreciate clarification of the meaning of the new addition referred to international norms and principles that flow from sovereignty in the section on international law.

The role of other interested parties in ensuring information security should not be overestimated. The OEWG is an intergovernmental process in which negotiation and decision-making are exclusive prerogatives of the Member States. We stress that only accredited representatives of businesses, NGOs and academia, including legal experts, have the right to participate in the activities of the OEWG.

Almost at the end of this substantive session, we stress the urgency to resolve the visa issue in a full and timely manner, adhering to the legally binding obligations of the host country.

We reiterate our strong desire to adopt a truly balanced and factual report. However, we stress that consensus cannot be achieved at the expense of the key interests of our countries, therefore, we advocate for a revised version of the final draft.

Thank you for your attention.