

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* in explanation of position on the annual progress report of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on security of and in the Use of ICTs 2021-2025

New York, 28 July 2023

Distinguished Mr. Chair,

We would like to express our appreciation for the effort put by Your Excellency and your team into developing the annual progress report (APR) and facilitating its consensual adoption. While supporting consensus on the document in the spirit of good will and compromise, we acknowledge the presence of significant flaws that are of deep concern to our delegations.

The APR is, to a large extent, devoted to the implementation of rules, norms and principles of responsible behaviour of states in the use of ICTs, while almost ignoring the priority task to further develop these norms. It is concerning that references to the latter have been 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.

We have been strong advocates of this democratic ever and consensus-building process of the OEWG on security of ICTs in which every Member State must be treated on an equal standing.

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 in the report without achieving a consensus.

Therefore, we do vehemently reserve the right to interpret or reject those provisions that contradict our national fundamental principles, policies, laws, regulations and values.

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.

We once again underline the urgency of resolving the visa issue for all national delegations and accredited non-governmental entities in a full and timely manner, ensuring the adherence to its legally binding obligations by the host country.

As the OEWG approaches its conclusion, it is of utmost importance to prioritize achieving greater consensus. It is disheartening to witness our perspectives and concrete proposals not receiving the attention they deserve and being affected by undue political agendas of some States. Eradicating such a situation is not just essential for this specific process, but also paramount for the efficiency of any future processes on international information security.

We kindly ask the Chair to include this statement, as well as the interventions of this group of states in the compendium of statements on the APR and make them available at relevant portals and websites.

Thank you for your attention.