

**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 Syrian Arab Republic and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela* on the draft annual progress report of the Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the Use of ICTs 2021-2025**

Mr. Chair,

We, *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 Syrian Arab Republic and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*, express our full support to the Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the Use of ICTs 2021-2025 and look forward to ensuring tangible results of the second year of the Group's activities. We note that the revised draft of the second APR (Rev.1) has a number of crucial drawbacks that raise significant concerns about the text. Thus, we believe that this draft is yet to be balanced and factual by incorporating the views and concerns of all Member States so as to reach a consensus. It is our firm belief that the following changes need to be made to the document:

1) The draft report should go strictly in line with the mandate of the OEWG as enshrined in the UNGA resolution 75/240, which tasks the Group to continue, as a priority, to further develop the rules, norms and principles of responsible behaviour of states and ways for their implementation. It is crucial to restore the necessary balance between the development and implementation of norms instead of laying excessive emphasis on the latter. Of significant importance is the elaboration of legally-binding obligations, as suggested by a number of states and reflected in UNGA resolutions.

2) The draft report should treat equally the variety of national proposals put forward by states within the OEWG. It should not lay excessive emphasis on some of them, including through dedicated sessions / intersessional meetings, while neglecting the others. To prove equal treatment of all national initiatives, the document should, therefore, reflect 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 77<sup>th</sup> UNGA session.

3) The draft report should not predetermine a future decision of states on the format of regular institutional dialogue on security in the use of ICTs under the UN auspices. Such a decision should be made by consensus and within the OEWG, not imposed by a group of states. Evident bias in favour of the Programme of Action (PoA) to advance responsible behavior of States in the use of ICTs is unacceptable. It is worth noting that the PoA is only one of the proposals on the table, which is not supported by all states, its substance remains unclear, its proposed structure, mandate, scope and method of work are subject to continuous change and impartial approaches.

4) The OEWG draft report should not include proposals which may be exploited for further politicization of ICT security issues, like a voluntary repository of threats to ICT security.

5) The OEWG should further discuss initiatives of States, within the mandate of the Group, for possible consideration and reflection in its future reports, to ensure their objective and politically neutral nature. Issues that fall out of the scope of the OEWG's mandate should be deleted from the APR.

6) The role of the private sector as well as the so called other interested parties in ensuring information security should not be overestimated. While the proposal to hold private actors accountable is yet to be reflected in the APR, it is unacceptable to highlight one specific organization, namely, the GFCE, as the main capacity-building initiative. The OEWG is an intergovernmental process in which negotiation and decision-making are exclusive prerogatives of the Member States.

Mr. Chair,

We reiterate our deep disappointment on the Host Country's failure to issue visas for a number of delegates. Those colleagues' absence will hinder our delegations' ability to fully participate in the session and will result in losing their

valuable and essential contributions. We would like to kindly request you, Mr. Chair, to find a suitable solution for this matter and urge the Host Country to uphold its legally binding obligations.

We remain committed to engaging constructively in negotiations on the annual progress report and look forward to crafting its language in a balanced and factual manner at the fifth session of the OEWG. We wish that the second APR could satisfy all member states to feel the ownership and garner an unquestionable consensus through a meaningful and interactive approach which in turn can avoid an undesirable situation for the delegations to take it or leave it on the last day of the substantive session. Having said that and along with these points, we will reiterate, in due course, our proposals aiming at materialize such a goal.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.