Statement by South Africa on confidence-building measures at the Open-Ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies (2021-2025), 7 March 2024, United Nations, New York

Chairperson,

We recognise that participation in this OEWG is a confidence-building measure (CBM) between States. As noted in both the 2021 OEWG and GGE reports, as the world's dependence on ICTs continues to increase, the responsible behaviour of States in the use of ICTs is of vital importance to the maintenance of international peace and security.

South Africa is pleased that the proposal for a voluntary global Points of Contact (POC) directory under the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) has been adopted by the General Assembly. We regard the POC directory as a first step to greater cooperation between States on identifying and responding to ICT security threats. We are in the process of appointing our POC representatives.

It is crucial to operationalise both the diplomatic and technical levels of the global POC directory to facilitate secure and direct communications between States to help prevent and address serious ICT incidents expeditiously and de-escalate tensions which can potentially lead to conflict. It is crucial to ensure clarity of the expected roles and responsibilities of the POCs, coordination functions to be performed and clear understanding of readiness requirements.

Chairperson,

The support of the United Nations, regional and sub-regional bodies to Member States critical to accelerate the universal implementation of the CBMs listed in the Initial List of Voluntary Global CBMs, as adopted in the second APR. This support could take the form of workshops and roundtable discussions to share experiences and expertise.

Chairperson,

Cooperation between States on capacity-building is critical, provided the agreed principles of the first OEWG are considered. That is, capacity-building should be evidence-based, politically neutral, transparent, accountable, and without conditions.

The first OEWG noted, in its final report, the necessary resources, capacities and engagement would allow CBMs to strengthen the overall security, resilience and peaceful use of ICTs because CBMS would also support implementation of norms of responsible State behaviour.

In this regard, proposals for public-private partnerships would support national implementation and development of CBMs. CERT-to-CERT cooperation would also enhance confidence between States.

Chairperson,

We support collective effort by all Member States and relevant stakeholders to ensure an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful ICT environment.

Thank you.