Statement by Finland

The 73rd Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly,
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Thematic Debate on Cybersecurity

Statement by
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(Check against delivery)
Mr Chairman,

Finland fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union.

The issues we discuss in this cluster could not be more topical. Especially responsible State behaviour in the use of ICTs needs to be increased in the interest of maintaining peace and stability as well as promoting an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful ICT environment.

Finland has expressed its grave concerns about the recent attacks against the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), attributed to the Russian authorities, and underlines the need to uphold international law in cyberspace.

The United Nations has played an important role in promoting the dialogue on different aspects of the use of information and communication technologies. The successive Groups of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security have agreed that generally applicable rules of international law apply also to State conduct in cyberspace.

Certain questions related to the application of existing legal rules in cyberspace remain open and could benefit from clarification. It would, however, be counterproductive to redefine unlawful intervention in the internal affairs of other states specifically in cyberspace.

Furthermore, as a procedural point, the code of conduct, called the "set of international rules, norms and principles of responsible behavior of States" in op. 1 of the Russian draft resolution, risks creating a confused mandate for future discussions. In our view, the normative work should be left to the bodies specifically designated for this purpose, which
also have the necessary expertise. The purpose of the resolution to be adopted here is to define the modalities of the future work, not to anticipate its results.

The 2015 GGE’s recommendations on responsible State behaviour has been welcomed by the UN General Assembly, which called upon States to be guided in their use of information and communication technologies by the 2015 GGE Report.

These recommendations still deserve our attention. They outline standards as to what states should do at the national level and how they should cooperate with each other, for instance, to protect the critical infrastructure, ensure the integrity of the supply chain, or to prevent the proliferation of malicious ICT tools and techniques and to share information.

It goes without saying that such recommendations are without prejudice to the rights and obligations of States under international law. At the same time, they can be seen as a practical contribution to clarify what ICT-specific steps States should take in order to comply with their obligation not to knowingly allow their territories to be used for activities that may cause significant harm to other States.

The GGEs have very usefully also discussed confidence-building measures and capacity building. This work should continue.

Finland supports the continuation of this process in the form of a new GGE, complemented, as appropriate, with a mechanism for consulting the UN membership and other interested stakeholders. The work should build on the achievements of the earlier GGEs.
The authority of the work in the UN in this field has been based on consensual support.

There is much value in trying to achieve consensus also this year on the modalities of future work. Finland is willing to participate in efforts to this end.