Statement of the Netherlands
delivered by
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Thematic Debate on Other Disarmament Measures and International Security

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Chairperson,

In addition to the statement delivered by the EU, the Netherlands would like to make some remarks in its national capacity.

The invisible ties that bind our world ever more closely are largely made up of ones and zeroes. When we talk about buzzwords like ‘connectivity’, we must recognise that it is the internet that facilitates most of the connections involved. Information technology advances innovation and productivity and that facilitates the sharing of ideas beyond borders.

Actions in cyberspace have a direct impact in the physical world. When cyber operations are directed against critical infrastructure, governments or societies, the artificial barrier between online and offline does not matter. When cyber operations make vital services unavailable to the public or when cyber attacks disrupt societies, the harmful effects will be felt immediately and widely, threatening international peace and security. To ensure states can reap the benefits of the digital transformation for economic growth, societal progress and development, states must co-operate to protect the rules-based international order.

The duty to advance the international rules-based order is enshrined in the Netherlands’ constitution. It is vital to ensure that this system is adhered to in all domains. International law is the cornerstone of the normative framework for responsible behaviour in cyberspace.

The Netherlands recalls that existing international law, in particular the UN Charter, is applicable to cyberspace and is essential to maintaining peace and stability and promoting a free, open and secure cyberspace including respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in cyberspace. This has been acknowledged by consensus by this General Assembly.

This year both the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) and the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) have started working on the important task of furthering global understanding of responsible state behaviour. The Netherlands welcomes the constructive and rich discussions of the first substantive meeting of the OEWG, in particular the affirmation that international law is applicable and that we already have a solid basis to work from with the previous GGE reports.

We look forward to continuing the discussions on the implementation of the GGE reports, further developing CBMs and the important work of capacity building. Equally, we are committed to further this framework through expert discussions in the GGE. Both the OEWG and GGE, and their respective Chairs, can count on the constructive intent of the Netherlands to ensure that both processes arrive at consensus outcomes. We urge all states to be constructive in moving the discussion forward.

Chairperson, before closing, let me highlight one particular topic:

The Netherlands believes in the importance and effectiveness of capacity building to enlarge the international support base for a free, open, and secure internet. A cyberspace where existing international law is followed and the consensus recommendations of the GGEs are adhered to. Building capacity on cybersecurity is also crucial to ensure sustainable development.

Rightfully so, the topic of capacity building has a central role in the OEWG and the GGE. The Netherlands deems it important to walk the talk on capacity building. Therefore, recalling the announcement of our Minister during the high-level week, the Netherlands will contribute one million euros to the World Bank’s Digital Development Partnership Trust Fund, to support global cybersecurity capacity building, in addition to our work in the context of the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise. The Netherlands would like to call on all states to join our efforts.

Thank you.