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74th UNGA First Committee
Thematic Discussion on Other Disarmament Measures
and International Security

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Mr. Chairman,

My remarks today will address U.S. views relating to developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security.

The 2018 U.S. National Cyber Strategy commits the United States to “promote a framework of responsible state behavior in cyberspace built upon international law, adherence to voluntary non-binding norms of state behavior that apply during peacetime, and the consideration of practical confidence-building measures to reduce the risk of conflict.”

Broad international consensus around these three elements – international law, peacetime norms, and confidence-building measures – is the signature accomplishment of international cyber diplomacy discussions over the last decade. The consensus reports of the 2010, 2013, and 2015 Group of Governmental Experts present the elements of this framework. The UN General Assembly, through 2015, ’16, and ’18 resolutions, reaffirmed that all states should follow the reports’ recommendations. We believe the time is now to prioritize universalization and implementation of the Framework for Responsible State Behavior, because doing so is in all states’ interests.

In 2018, the UN General Assembly began two new processes on ICTs in the context of international security – the sixth round of the Group of Governmental Experts and the first Open Ended Working Group. Our Deputy Secretary of State recently referred to the OEWG and the GGE as two “opportunities” to “refine critical guidance to states and identify ways to improve capacity across the board” in the area of cybersecurity. Our goal for both venues is to universalize the recommendations made by consensus, and welcomed by the UN General Assembly, in the three successful GGE reports.
We are looking forward to the start of the new round of the GGE. We believe this GGE, as a group of experts, should aim to provide in-depth considerations and guidance to support the implementation of the recommendations contained in the three consensus GGE reports. Previous successful rounds of the GGE have demonstrated the value of consensus-driven, expert-level negotiation on this topic within the UN.

Despite voting against the resolution that created the OEWG, the United States has committed to contribute constructively to its work. We believe the OEWG, which is open to all member States, provides an ideal complementary venue to broaden awareness of the Framework of Responsible State Behavior and to discuss ways we can provide capacity building to help States implement and uphold it.

The OEWG and GGE are two distinct but related processes, mandated by separate resolutions, and each with their own schedules and deadlines. Therefore, we believe it would be appropriate for the First Committee to have two distinct but complementary texts on ICTs in the context of international security this year to reflect that each of these processes have started their work.

We look forward to the start of the GGE, in December 2019, and the next meeting of the OEWG, in February 2020 and hope that both processes result in meaningful, consensus outcomes that improve international stability in cyberspace.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.