



**10th substantive session of the Open-ended Working Group on security of  
and in the use of information and communication technologies 2021-2025**

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As delivered



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Thank you very much Mr. Chair,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to once again have the opportunity to brief the Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies.

It is hard to believe that this is the penultimate session before the Working Group's mandate concludes in July.

It has been a long, and sometimes arduous, road.

But it has been an important journey with many positive markers along the way.

Steady, consistent progress has always been a defining characteristic of this group.

From elaborating confidence-building measures to the convening of the first Global Roundtable on capacity-building to unpacking new threats, including the impact of emerging technologies like AI, the Group's milestones are clear.

The Global Intergovernmental Points of Contact Directory, now with the participation of 116 and counting, is another tremendous achievement.

The Directory is a prime example of a concrete output that not only serves as a confidence-building measure in its own right but is a vehicle through which other such measures can be pursued.

In this way, it has the potential to be multiplying force for progress.

My Office is working closely with the Chair and our partners UNIDIR and ITU in the preparation of the first POC simulation exercise in March.

We look forward to broad and active participation.

But now, as we enter the final phase of this journey, our attention is rightfully towards the future.

And the future is anything but certain.

Challenges to international peace and security arising from State use of ICTs continues to grow.

Incidents of malicious use of ICTs by both State and non-State actors remain well documented, including those with impacts on infrastructure providing essential services to the public, like healthcare, banking and government services.

Concerns that technological advances are outpacing our governance structures are coming from all corners—from governments and civil society alike.

Lightspeed developments in artificial intelligence, in particular, are raising flags.

But as the Secretary-General has said, we begin 2025 lifted by the commitments of the Pact for the Future and the Global Digital Compact.

These commitments are an affirmation of the underlying power and purpose of the United Nations in our eightieth anniversary year.

Leveraging those frameworks, we can close digital divides and harness technologies for good, while also mitigating risks.

Pursuant to these commitments, States are already actively engaging in discussions on how to enhance global governance of AI through the establishment of an International Scientific Panel and Global Dialogue.

But more remains to be done.

This Working Group has the unique opportunity to create a permanent, single-track mechanism on ICT security matters under United Nations auspices—thus setting the stage for long-term progress in the years to come.

There is already a strong basis in the consensus elements agreed in July last year in the third annual progress report.

The foundational elements of the mechanism are clear—from guiding principles to function and scope, to structure, modalities and decision-making.

As I said at the previous session in December, there are a number of outstanding matters to tackle, but this next year is a chance to build on what has already been agreed.

We are working towards a seamless transition, which is what we all hope for.

While there is not unanimity in all matters at hand, the Working Group has

undeniably served as an indispensable platform for exchange.

This commitment to constructive exchange has driven progress forward.

I trust this same commitment will help States find consensus on the outstanding matters for the future mechanism.

I must acknowledge the efforts of the very able Chair of this process, Ambassador Gafoor in forging a consensus on these matters.

The Chair's latest discussion paper on elements for stakeholder modalities and the dedicated thematic groups is a strong basis for further discussion.

In particular, I welcome States' consideration of the topics for consideration of the future thematic groups.

It is critical that States have the space to consider these issues with a view to action-oriented recommendations.

Having spent nearly five years in this forum actively discussing a wide range of issues, the need for deeper substantive exchange is clear.

Building resilience of critical infrastructure, enhancing cooperation in the management of ICT incidents, preventing conflict and increasing stability in the ICT sphere—represent just a few of these discussion topics.

On the matter of stakeholders, I have repeatedly emphasized the value of inclusive, diverse and sustained engagement given the unique nature of ICTs and the central role played by non-governmental entities in the management of

many ICT resources.

Diverse stakeholders have much to contribute to this and any future process.

This includes direct support to States in implementation of the normative framework as well the provision of technical, legal and other expert advice.

Partnerships amongst relevant stakeholders—from States to the business community to technical experts to scholars—are an essential ingredient to our collective efforts in ensuring a peaceful and secure ICT environment.

My hope is that all delegations will exercise maximum flexibility in finalizing modalities for stakeholder engagement that provide for inclusive and sustained engagement, while of course safeguarding the intergovernmental nature of the process.

Mr. Chair,

Distinguished delegates,

Dear colleagues,

It is not often that States have the chance to put in place a mechanism of a permanent nature.

We are often looking to just the next two, three or five years at a time.

I am confident this unique opportunity to create something enduring for future generations will not be lost.

The peace and security of the ICT environment is too important to waste it.

I thank you very much for your attention and wish you a successful week.