

STATEMENT BY MR GAURAV KEERTHI, DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE (DEVELOPMENT), CYBER SECURITY AGENCY OF SINGAPORE AT THE VIRTUAL CONSULTATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP, 22 FEBRUARY 2021

Thank you, Chair.

1 First of all, I would like to acknowledge the Chair and his team in running the process, and on their effort in putting together the zero-draft report. Singapore fully supports the Chair's effort in achieving positive outcomes in this current OEWG. In our view, the OEWG would have made significant progress when we achieve two key outcomes.

2 First, our discussions at this OEWG in and of itself is a significant achievement. As mentioned by some of our colleagues like Slovenia and Argentina, this is the first time that all 193 member states are participating in an open, inclusive, and transparent UN process, which has raised awareness on the critical issues for the responsible use of ICTs by States in the context of international peace and security. We should not take what we have discussed in this process lightly. The OEWG discussions have catalysed further discussions and actions within and beyond regional organisations, such as ASEAN, with the wider UN membership now gaining a better understanding and participating in advancing security and stability in cyberspace. We would not have seen such an extent of discussions on cybersecurity three years ago. Achieving a consensus report would thus signal the UN member states' commitment to continuing these international cyber discussions. Whether we have a long report or a short one, what matters is that all of us believe that the report is a step forward from where we started. Not achieving consensus would be a step backwards for all of us, especially for small states like us who look to the UN to make progress on these issues.

3 Second, the affirmation of the existing acquis from past UN GGE reports, including support for the implementation of the 11 voluntary, non-binding norms of responsible State behaviour in cyberspace from the 2015 GGE report. This will form a good foundation for future discussions on the rules-based order in cyberspace. These 11 norms might have been adopted already by UNGA Resolution 70/237, but having the OEWG reaffirm these 11 norms in our consensus report will anchor them as the foundation upon which we can build further consensus and progress.

4 Turning to the zero-draft report, it is a good starting-point, which captures the diversity of views expressed during our discussions and at the same time shows where there has been broad agreement.

5 We appreciate the Chair's action-oriented approach with the draft, where each of the substantive sections contained conclusions and recommendations for States to act upon after the conclusion of this OEWG process. We believe that the OEWG final report could build upon the acquis that has been established thus far, to ensure that the new OEWG can continue the work we have begun in forging consensus among the wider UN membership.

6 As many colleagues have spoken before me, such as Chile, the Netherlands, and Pakistan, we support the inclusion of the POA to be discussed in future processes for regular institutional dialogue. Singapore is a supporter of the POA and we believe that the POA could be a middle-ground approach that would drive ongoing cyber discussions at the UN towards implementation.

7 Given that the new OEWG will be convened in the context of the First Committee in an inclusive and transparent format involving the wider UN

membership, one possible option would be to elaborate on the modalities and form of the POA within the context of the new OEWG. We would like to see discussions on the POA become an important workstream in the new OEWG.

8 We would also like to express support for the numerous mentions of the important role of regional organisations in supporting the cyber normative framework, in particular norms implementation, confidence building measures and capacity-building, as well as references to a multi-stakeholder approach.

9 There were also several discussions on the importance of protecting cross-border Critical Information Infrastructure (CIIs) and we would like to thank the Chair for incorporating this point in paragraph 50. However, there may be concerns with the current language which may call into question who has jurisdiction over these CIIs. The Chair may wish to consider a formulation that focuses on the *impact* that damage to these CIIs could cause, as well as the *desired outcomes*. We will follow-up with suggested textual edits to this paragraph in writing after this meeting.

10 On a broader note, recent cyber breaches that have affected both government and industry alike and these underscore the salience of ongoing discussions. More importantly, there is a need to make progress and cooperate on areas of convergence so that we can collectively work towards a rules-based order in cyberspace. To this end, we reiterate our support for the Chair's efforts in achieving a consensus outcome and urge Member States to remain flexible towards this end.

11 Given that we are in our final stages of producing the OEWG consensus report, in-person meetings, whether represented by Mission or capital, would be the best modality to achieve positive outcomes. To this end, we are inclined to

support the Chair's proposal to postpone the final meeting of the OEWG, as the situation remains difficult for travel in March. But this should not be a divisive point for the Group. If we do postpone, we should also take the opportunity to preserve the momentum that we have and continue our discussions virtually in the lead up to the final in-person meeting, whether in July or August.

12 Mr Chair, these discussions have been very frank and robust, and I thank you for encouraging these debates as part of the OEWG's process. We are now moving to the last stage, where we should recognise the immense progress we have all made, and exercise flexibility – and perhaps some creativity – to find language that can help us achieve a consensus report.

Thank you.

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