First Committee

"Thematic Discussion on Other Disarmament Measures and International Security"

Statement by Austria

delivered by

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1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of my own country, Austria, and also on behalf of Hungary.

2. Hungary and Austria align themselves with the Statement made on behalf of the European Union. With the Austrian Foreign Minister being the current Chairperson-in-Office of the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Hungarian Ambassador in Vienna chairing the Informal Working Group dealing with cyber issues, Hungary and Austria would like to add the following points:

3. We commend the efforts of the members of all the Groups of Governmental Experts so far, working on the application of existing international law to cyber space. While we regret that all the efforts this year didn’t result in another agreed consensus report, we are convinced that the reports of the previous UN GGEs will continue to be the basis of our work to strengthen stability and security in an open and peaceful internet where human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected.

4. As recommended by an earlier UN GGE report, Confidence Building Measures can enhance trust and assurance among States and help reduce the risk of conflict by increasing predictability and reducing misperception. This is an area where the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has undertaken significant work over the last years.

5. In 2012, the Permanent Council of the OSCE established a cross-dimensional Informal Working Group tasked with developing practical measures designed to avoid misunderstandings and to increase transparency, co-operation and stability between States with regard to cyberspace. Based on the work of the Informal Working Group, participating States have adopted 16 confidence-building measures (CBMs) to reduce the risks of conflict stemming from the use of information and telecommunication technologies (ICTs). This year’s Informal Working Group, chaired by Ambassador Károly Dán, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the OSCE, focusses on implementation of key confidence building measures. Today, the lack of a consensus among the members of the 2016-2017 UN GGE renders the task of
implementing the OSCE's confidence building measures (CBMs) all the more urgent; and makes pertinent progress at the OSCE in 2017 particularly important.

6. Under the current Austrian OSCE Chairmanship, rebuilding trust and confidence in the OSCE area figures among the 3 Chairmanship priorities for this year. In this context, Austria organised a Conference on Cyber Security in February 2017 that was devoted to the implementation of confidence-building measures and in particular to the protection of critical infrastructure.

7. The 2nd Chairmanship Conference, which will be held on 3 November in Vienna, will offer another opportunity to discuss intensifying cooperation in three areas that currently pose the biggest challenges in cyberspace with a view to agree on a Ministerial Council decision:
   • cooperative measures to address terrorist and criminal use of ICTs in line with OSCE commitments;
   • protecting critical infrastructure from malicious ICT activities; and
   • protection of human rights in the Internet.

8. Therefore, most fundamentally, a steadfast commitment to applying existing international law to the cyber context, including, inter alia, the UN Charter and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as adherence to principles laid down in the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter remain preconditions for any effective co-operation aiming at enhancing cyber/ICT security and tackling pertinent cyber threats.

9. Regarding the criminal use of ICTs, the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime, also known as the Budapest Convention, is an important tool for pursuing a common policy aimed at protecting the society as a whole against cybercrime, and the rapid ratification by those states who are not yet party to it may contribute to the strengthening of international cooperation in this field.
10. Lastly, Hungary and Austria recognise the role of the UN in further developing a normative framework for responsible state behaviour in cyber space, and call on UN Member States to use this guidance by the UN GGE reports which the UNGA has repeatedly endorsed, to contribute to strengthening cyber security for a free, peaceful and accessible cyber space.