

STATEMENT BY THE ZIMBABWE DELEGATION DURING THE INFORMAL MEETING TO DISCUSS THE ZERO DRAFT REPORT OF THE OEWG ON DEVELOPMENT IN ICT IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY: 22 FEBRUARY 2020

Chairperson,

At the outset, Zimbabwe would like to join other delegations in commending Ambassador Jurg Lauber and his team for coming up with the zero-draft of the Report of the OEWG which is before us today. The draft, which attempted to capture the diverse views, proposals and interests expressed by Member States during the numerous formal and informal sessions of the OEWG held over the past year, is a good basis for further discussions and negotiations.

My delegation wishes to align itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Cote d'Ivoire on behalf of the Africa Group (AG), as well as the statement delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM). Over and above that, we will make the following remarks general and specific remarks in our national capacity.

We begin by joining our Russian and Chinese colleagues in expressing concern at the zero-draft's silence on the transition from the current OEWG to a new one in the context of the mandate conferred by UNGA resolution 75/240. While acknowledging that it is a new creation, Zimbabwe is of the view that the new OEWG will undoubtedly have its roots in the work of the current OEWG, and therefore the final report should acknowledge or create a linkage between the two. Zimbabwe aligns itself with the position of the AG, the Russian and the Chinese delegations on this matter.

Chairperson,

We would like to thank colleagues who have reminded us of the need to as much as possible, include consensus language, written in an objective and balanced manner, reflecting the majority views of Member States. In this regard, we reiterate that caution should be exercised when using new language and terms such as

“vulnerable populations” in paragraph 24. In the context of the OEWG, this is new language that could cause divisions. Zimbabwe therefore supports the call by the AG to stick agreed language.

Colleagues,

Throughout our formal and informal sessions, we consistently cautioned on the need to remain alive to the focus of the First Committee in general and the OEWG in particular. My delegation therefore, believes that while they are important, issues of sustainable development, human rights and gender equality should not be given undue prominence in the work and report of the OEWG, lest they distract us from the primary focus on ICT and international security. These issues can be dealt with competently by other specialized bodies of the UN.

Zimbabwe also wishes to draw attention to another very prominent theme which was highlighted during the meetings of the OEWG namely, the concern over the development and deployment of military or offensive applications of ICT, as well as the weaponisation of outer space. It was consistently argued that this was contrary to the objective of maintaining a stable, peaceful, development-oriented and rule based global international ICT order. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Working Paper dwells on this matter in greater detail and we join other delegations in calling for the zero-draft to be unequivocal in this regard.

Chairperson,

My delegation concurs with colleagues who spoke before us that it is imperative to lend more clarity to the concepts of Transparency, Accountability and Shared Responsibility that are discussed in the report. We hope that the definitions, applicability, and relevance of these concepts will be further defined and refined in the context of capacity building so that we are all clear of the essence of their inclusion.

Chair,

My delegation would like to recall that during the discussions on capacity building, we raised the issue of Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCMs) and how they impact on the capacity of member states to defeat threats from, as well as take advantage of opportunities in the global ICT domain. We argued that UCMs have placed some countries at a distinct disadvantage, while leaving others vulnerable as the UCMs have negatively impacted on their ability to build effective infrastructure to deal with the malicious use of ICT tools and applications. This delegation recalls that a few other delegations also addressed this matter. We would be grateful if this matter finds space in an appropriate section of the zero draft of the final report.

Before concluding, my delegation wishes to comment on one organizational aspect, namely the proposal to postpone the Third and Final Substantive Session scheduled for 08 to 12 March 2021. We will understand this proposal if it is being made in the context of COVID 19 driven restrictions, which may prevent an effective in-person meeting. However, if the idea is to give us more time for discussion, this delegation feels that there may be no need. Our view is that delegations have submitted sufficient input for a comprehensive consensus report and that Ambassador LAUBER and his team are competent enough to capture and reflect the outstanding input in the remaining time. Our view is that the problem is not that of adequate time, but lack of the spirit of compromise and consensus. For as long as that is lacking, we will still disagree even if we are given an additional one year to discuss. It has to be borne in mind, Chair, that 2021 is going to be a busy year owing to the numerous meetings scheduled later on, that were postponed from 2020. Our humble opinion is that let's make the most out of the time available before the third and final substantive session and postpone when it is absolutely necessary.

In conclusion, Zimbabwe believes that we should continue to exchange views beyond today in the remaining days to achieve the widest possible consensus on as many issues as possible. We reaffirm our commitment to constructively engage in the process

with other delegations and with the Chair. Zimbabwe looks forward to the adoption of a consensus report that take into account the diverse interests and views of all the members of the UN, large and small.

I thank you for your attention!