



Statement by Special representative of the President of the Russian Federation on international cooperation on information security, Ambassador-at-large A.V.Krutskikh at the Second Session of the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security

9 September 2019

Distinguished Chair,

Dear colleagues,

Today the UN Open-ended Working Group on International Information Security (IIS) gets down to its substantive discussion for the first time. I would like to express special gratitude to the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs and personally to Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu for her contribution to the work of this important mechanism, her wisdom and willingness to assist the states in every possible way.

I would like to share with you the vision of the Russian side of the main substantive and tactical issues of the work of our group.

1. The strategic line, as set in my instructions, is to do our best to facilitate the restoration of the consensus on IIS in the UN. The situation in this field is rapidly deteriorating. If we disregard the propagandistic wrapping, it would be clear that cyber confrontation is on the rise, and if we fail to find joint efforts the effective ways to fight these threats, the global cyberwar will be just down the road.

In this respect we are open for the dialogue with all the states and groups of states and we believe that our collective work should be structured in the most efficient way. We should not try to change each other's political stance but rather fulfill our diplomatic duty and agree on how we should collectively exist in the information space.

2. Along the lines of our strategy we are fully supportive of the Chair's policy which suggests that all the states should have a chance to deliver a statement on ISS. We agree that this substantive session will be devoted to the presentation by states of their political positions and concrete proposals. This is what constitutes the chief distinction of our OEWG, its status and this is the feature that distinguishes it from the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE).

3. At the same time the world will judge our work by the concrete result represented by the report of the OEWG to the General Assembly and Secretary-General rather than by words. We have very little time to produce this report. In fact, for that we have two sessions – next February and July. In other words, formally it is ten working days. This necessitates intense diplomatic work in the intersessional period. The main thing is that we should work on the concrete draft. The sooner it is presented (preferably even before November), the higher our chances for success are. In this case we will be able to scrutinize the draft, introduce the necessary amendments and even agree on them among ourselves and at the February session of the OEWG to polish and finalize our joint report.

We can considerably support the Chair by providing concrete rather than ideological formulas, suggesting exhaustive language which allow the Chair, his consultants and the secretary of the Group to take our suggestions into account while drafting the report.

The last point I would like to mention here. We have neither teachers nor students in this room. We all enjoy sovereign equality. Every country is perfectly aware of its stance, so we do not need to be lectured by anybody.

4. On the previous UN GA session there was a danger that the UN discussion process on IIS may be broken, and all talks become regional. Luckily, we managed to agree on not one, but two negotiating mechanisms: OEWG and GGE. For Russia, as a country that at a time initiated the creation of the GGE, both groups are of fundamental importance. Thus the negotiation process can be intensified and diversified, or to put it in simpler terms, can allow us to find ways of ensuring IIS more efficiently. But it is also important to understand that the status of these two groups is different. In the OEWG the responsibility rests with the governments, and it is exactly they who can and must agree among themselves. The GGE has a very important but a different status as an expert platform, according to rules and procedures of the UN.

Both groups are two independent mechanisms, which should operate in parallel – they should not rival or substitute each other, on the contrary, they should be mutually reinforcing.

From our perspective, such an effect can be achieved by a certain degree of specialization between the two, although judging by their almost identical mandates, they are entitled to discuss the broad array of topics relating to the IIS.

5. In the opinion of the Russian Federation, the OEWG should concentrate on such important topics as rules and norms of responsible behavior of states in information space and digital capacity building, meaning assisting the developing countries to bridge “digital gap” and also on thorough analysis of the threats in the digital field, which every passing year are gaining new qualities.

6. We agree that the OEWG is not starting from scratch, as it should rely on already existing positive experience of the 2010, 2013 and 2015 GGE reports, the respective UN GA resolutions and also useful regional practices achieved in OSCE, SCO, BRICS, the ASEAN Regional Forum on security, AU and etc.

As I see it, we should take the first and most important step which will allow to universalize under the auspices of the UN the already reached agreements, compromises and recommendations and if possible to complement them with new ones.

In this context, we should not pursue the amount of pages the report has. On the precedent of the OSCE, in which I happened to take part in, we managed to develop a consensus report which was based on a compromise approach, and not on attempts of individual states “to overburden” the Chair with radical and

biased proposals.

To sum it up, our challenge is to return the discussions into a consensus track and to ensure the successful outcome of this truly historical forum under the UN auspices.

Unfortunately, I cannot end my statement on such an optimistic note. I have to publicly within the UN family touch upon an uncomfortable topic that is unfortunately becoming political.

In the UN process all the states are equal and sovereign. It is up to them and only to them to determine the composition of their delegations at the negotiations under the UN auspices.

However, in recent times not only Russia, but other countries already almost on a regular basis are faced a situation when members of the delegation either do not get a visa at all, including for the OEWG sessions, or get them when it is already too late. By doing this, the US are in fact censoring the composition of our negotiating teams, and extending the “visa warfare” towards the UN. By doing this they interfere in the operation of the normal UN diplomatic process. This is a direct violation by the host country of the UN headquarters of its obligations both towards the Organization and to all states forming the UN family.

I emphasize – we do not desperately want to visit the US, we are heading to the United Nations. If such practice continues, then Russia, along with other like-minded states, will raise the question of at least to relocate from the USA all the important international negotiations including, of course, OEWG and GGE.

That said I would like to bring to the attention that with their visa policies the USA impede the work of the UN Secretariat and place the leadership of our Organization in a very ambiguous position.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.