



CZECH REPUBLIC

Statement by

Mr. Richard Kadlčák

**Special Envoy for Cyberspace
Director of Cybersecurity Department**

(check against delivery)

**at the 2nd substantive session
of the
Open-ended Working Group on developments in the field of
information and telecommunications in the context of
international security**

**of the First Committee of the
the General Assembly of the United Nations**

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Thank you Mr. Chair.

As this is the first time I am taking the floor in this session, allow me to first express the Czech Republic's deep appreciation for the professional manner in which you and your team prepared this session. Let me assure you that you can count on our full support.

In general terms, the Czech Republic welcomes the rich and comprehensive discussion at the first substantive session of the OEWG from last September and appreciates the very useful informative exchanges that took place during the first multi-stakeholder consultative meeting last December.

As for **current and emerging threats**, it has been repeatedly mentioned by many delegations in the previous meeting that the development of information and communication technologies improves our lives, provides unprecedented opportunities for economic growth and constitutes the backbone of our society. At the same time it is a source of serious risks and threats.

Delegations mentioned many specific threats and risks and I think it is not necessary to repeat all of them. I just limit myself to the statement that the Czech Republic shares the majority of concerns expressed by States in September's substantive meeting.

At this moment I would like to highlight just one issue, which – in the opinion of the Czech Republic - deserves special attention. The Czech Republic is deeply concerned about the potential abuse of new technologies to constrain human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mr. Chair, in preparation for this session, you asked delegations *“to address any existing potential threats that should be discussed or may require further discussion.”* In all the discussions we had up until this point, we felt that the focus on state-centric views of threats in cyberspace has somewhat obfuscated what should be the guiding rationale of our deliberations - achieving the safety and security of individuals in the digital domain.

Cybersecurity threats have the potential to affect ICT infrastructure worldwide impacting physical infrastructure, software and hardware, as well as systems upon which our societies, communities, and individuals depend. As the world becomes increasingly dependent on digital technology, cybersecurity threats imperil lives, health and the well-being of people everywhere.

While law enforcement must be able to protect the human rights of victims of harmful cyber activities, we are concerned with the practice of some States of asserting greater control over the Internet, with the pretext of ensuring national cybersecurity while disregarding international human rights law and the principles of an open, free, secure and interoperable internet.

Additionally, some technologies and practices could pose risks for the enjoyment of human rights, including when used for unlawful or arbitrary surveillance, whether mass or targeted, including through the use of facial recognition or other biometric technologies; unlawful or arbitrary

restrictions on encryption and anonymity; restrictions of content; and network shutdowns that are inconsistent with international human right law.

In this context, the Czech Republic supported activity of Freedom Online Coalition. We participated in the Summit of Freedom On-line Coalition in Accra, Ghana, last week, and we fully supported the Joint Statement on Human Rights Impact of Cybersecurity Laws, Practices and Policies.¹

Mr. Chair, this issue is highly important for the Czech Republic not only per se, but also in the wider context as an element to the discussion on effective multilateralism. It is quite a serious topic this year as we commemorate 75 years from the establishment of the UN.

The Czech Republic supports international cooperation to promote security and stability of cyberspace, to reduce the risk of misperception, escalation and conflict that stem from ICT incidents, as well as to strengthen defence capacities to achieve global resilience. It is of paramount importance that such cooperation is a part of rule-based international order – in full respect of applicable international law and norms, particularly the UN Charter. This order should be based on common values such as peace, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

We see the work of the OEWG from this perspective and we are deeply convinced that the effort of the OEWG should focus on advancing this order and delivering positive results.

Thank you.

¹ Freedom Online Coalition Joint Statement on Human Rights Impact of Cybersecurity Laws, Practices and Policies, available at: <https://freedomonlinecoalition.com/news/foc-issues-joint-statement-on-human-rights-impact-of-cybersecurity-laws-practices-and-policies/>