Delegation from the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Position Paper for the United Nations General Assembly

The topics before the United Nations (UN) General Assembly are: The Role of Emerging Technologies in International Security and Disarmament; Improving Mechanisms for Accountability and Transparency within the UN System; and Intensification of Efforts to Eliminate all Forms of Violence against Women. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) is appreciative of the actions already taken by the United Nations regarding these topics and is deeply committed to furthering the efforts to find comprehensive solutions.

I. The Role of Emerging Technologies in International Security and Disarmament

The role of emerging technologies in international security and disarmament has been on the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly since 1988. One of the fields that has grown the most is information technology. In Africa, internet user population increased hundredfold since 2000, and there are now more than 4 billion internet users worldwide. If not regulated, cyberspace could represent a vulnerability whose exploitation could destabilise the International Community. Some states have begun to develop information and communication technology (ICT) for military purposes. The *2015 Report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security* (70/174) noticed "disturbing trends that create risks to international peace and security ", and concerns over the malicious use of information technology by state and non-state actors have become more frequent. The report also mentioned the increased possibility of the use of ICTs for terrorist purposes. The president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Félix Tshisekedi, has made safety from terrorism one of his priorities. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is therefore committed to find a solution that allows Member States to peacefully develop and apply ICTs while reigning in abuse.

The Information Telecommunications Union (ITU) is the United Nations specialized agency for ICTs since 1947 and is concerned with the use of ICTs for international development. To support the peaceful development of information technology, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has participated and hosted several regional workshops on cybersecurity. Report 70/174 offers recommendations for voluntary, non-binding rules of conduct to promote an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful ICT environment. In October 2018, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was among the 31 Member States sponsoring General Assembly Resolution 73/266 that codified the recommendations and established a working group that will work on further developing rules for cyber security, study threats and possible capacity- and confidence-building measures and possible actions in the field of information security. Due to the international interconnectedness the internet offers, both the possibilities of ICTs for social and economic development and the risks of ICTs have grown. The 2016 report of the Secretary General titled *Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy* (70/826) mentions the increased use of ICTs for terrorist recruitment and the increased risk of cyberterrorism.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is convinced that international rules, norms and principles regarding cyber space need to strengthen the use of ICTs for collaboration and development, while mitigating the risk of ICTs being used as a weapon. Member States should cooperate in developing strategies to prevent the use of ICTs for terrorist purposes without violating Human Rights. Therefore, modelled on the existing bilateral and multilateral cybersecurity workshops, the Democratic Republic of the Congo supports the establishment of annual international cybersecurity workshops, coordinated by the ITU, that should work on capacity building and cybersecurity strategies. These workshops would also serve the purpose of building trust between Member States. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is looking forward to international cooperation regarding this subject.

II. Improving Mechanisms for Accountability and Transparency within the UN System

The aims of the United Nations can only be achieved if the decisions and actions of the United Nations are transparent, well-monitored and if responsibilities are distributed fairly. Bodies and staff members that have been assigned responsibility must be answerable for the result they have delivered. Without transparency and accountability, the United Nations cannot make well-informed decisions, nor implement them efficiently.

Accountability and transparency have been important to the United Nations since its inceptions, and it has implemented various internal and external control and accountability mechanisms and bodies.

According to Article 97 of the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945), the Secretary General is the "chief administrative officer" of the United Nations and it is among his responsibilities to "make an annual report to the General Assembly on the work of the Organization". In the 2018 *Eighth progress report on the accountability system in the United Nations Secretariat: strengthening accountability under the new management paradigm* (73/688), the Secretary General reports on the progress made in implementing the requests made in General Assembly Resolution 64/259 (2010) and in resolution 72/303 (2018), such as improved reporting mechanisms, a better system for delegating authority and a focus on results, and management reforms. One of the important measures to be undertaken is strengthening the individual staff member's commitment to transparency and accountability, for example through reporting wrong-doings or awareness of fraud-risks. The Ethics Office, established as an office within the United Nations Secretariat in 2005, has published a The Roadmap in 2013 to help staff members navigate the United Nations policies regarding staff concerns, including advice on reporting misconduct.

To further the Secretary General's efforts to improve accountability, the United Nations General Assembly should take note of the progress made and second the plans for improved accountability. In addition, the United Nations should raise awareness of the measures to report misconduct, of fraud risks and the responsibilities of individual staff members and missions by offering workshops and training certificates as part of an internal information campaign and compulsory for new staff members. In addition, the General Assembly should call on all UN bodies to report diligently on the implementation of their responsibilities. The General Assembly should commit to staying updated and aware of the implementation of its resolutions by all relevant bodies.

III. Intensification of Efforts to Eliminate All Forms of Violence against Women

The Democratic Republic of the Congo remains adversely affected by terrorism and conflict. Women are among those who are most vulnerable in times of conflict. More than a third of women and girls worldwide has experienced physical or sexual violence during their lifetime. Ending violence against women is not only a prerequisite for social and economic development, it is also a matter of Human Rights. President Félix Tshisekedi has identified Human Rights as one of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's priorities for the next decade. The Democratic Republic of the Congo appreciates the support it has received from the United Nations regarding measures to combat violence against women and is dedicated to continuing the task in tandem with the International Community.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo acknowledges and supports the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), according to which women have the right to safety and freedom from torture, as well as the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has signed the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* in 1980. Since signing, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has made steady progress in combatting violence and discrimination against women in legislation and society, as can be seen in the report submitted in 2018 to the *Committee on the Elimination against Discrimination against Women.* In coordination with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a Comprehensive Strategy on Combating Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo was developed in 2009 and a National Strategy on Combating Gender Based Violence was subsequently put into place. Since then, progress has been made in the sectors of protection from and prevention of gender-based violence, ending impunity, security sector reform, assistance for victims of violence; and data collection and mapping, however, there remains much work to be done, as the *Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-related Sexual Violence* (2018/250) points out. The 2018 report by UN Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, also offers suggestions to Member States on how to combat violence against women in the pursuit of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (70/1), focusing on legislation, multisectoral services, prevention and data collection.

To find a comprehensive solution, Member States should be called upon to incorporate the recommendations given by the Secretary General and UN Women into their national policies. This should include legislation to eliminate gender-based discrimination. Special focus should be put on the enforceability of the rules. Member States should support UN Women in gathering information and data and improve their data collection and analysis methods. For this, all Member States should consider inviting UN Women to evaluate the progress made on a national and regional level to eliminate violence against women and to benefit from the experience of UN Women in coordinating and developing and implementing national strategies for the elimination of gender-based violence.