Delegation from the Republic of the Congo

Position Paper for the General Assembly

The topics before the United Nations (UN) General Assembly (GA) 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 Republic of the Congo believes that it is in the greatest interest of all Member States to cooperate closely to effectively deal with the items on the agenda and is deeply committed to the goals of international disarmament, accountability and transparency within the UN system, and the elimination of violence against women.

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

The citizens of the Republic of the Congo have in recent decades been witnesses to the horrors of armed conflicts in many neighboring countries, as well as in the Republic of the Congo itself during the civil wars from 1993 to 1994 and from 1997 to 1999. The Republic of the Congo is thus fully committed to international security and disarmament. Currently, the most important emerging technology with respect to international conflict is information technology. In 2015, the Secretary General expressed his concern that unless they are addressed properly, cyberattacks may pose a threat to international peace and security (A/70/174). As is the case with other emerging technologies, such as space and biotechnology, information technology can be used both for civilian and military purposes. Accelerated development and increased availability of information technology for everyone, including the citizens of developing nations, such as the Republic of the Congo, are of utmost importance for the future of the economy, public health and human development. However, the same technology risks being weaponized by both state and non-sate actors, such as international criminal and terrorist organizations.

Since the line between those two kinds of usage of information technology can be blurry, the UN should work to build an international framework governing cybersecurity and information technology. Together with its partners in the African Union (AU), the Republic of the Congo has undertaken efforts to establish a multilateral regional framework of cyber security. This includes the African Cyber Security and Coordination Committee, as well as the African Union Convention on Cyber Security, which the Republic of the Congo signed in 2015.Chapter III of the latter addresses various aspects of Cyber Security, including the policies that are to be undertaken by the national governments, legislation that is to be implemented, the rights of citizens that are to be respected, the role of the private sector, the institutional framework that is to be established, and more. Additionally, the AU has undertaken measures to cooperate more closely with the European Union (EU) on the issue of cybersecurity. The Republic of the Congo also strongly supports the resolutions passed by the GA on this issue, most notably the resolutions 58/199 (2003) and 72/28 (2017).

The Republic of the Congo recalls the attention of the Member States to paragraph 6 of resolution 58/199, which “stresses the necessity for enhanced efforts to close the digital divide, to achieve universal access to information and communication technologies and to protect critical information infrastructures by facilitating the transfer of information technology and capacity-building, in particular to developing countries, especially the least developed countries, so that all States may benefit fully from information and communication technologies for their socio-economic development.” Today, this need is still as pressing as it was 15 years ago. The Republic of the Congo thus encourages all Member States to take whatever action lies within their capacity to address it. Furthermore, the Republic of the Congo stresses the need for an international framework governing cybersecurity and invites all Member States to join the efforts of the AU in establishing such a framework, which might globally enact the principles set forth in the aforementioned African Union Convention on Cyber Security.

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

The UN provide the global community with the key institutional framework for cooperation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. It is therefore of utmost importance to function free of corruption and misconduct. To achieve this, the UN system must be organized in a way that is transparent, and where

officials on every level are held accountable for their actions. Being a large, spread out and complex institution, the UN have not always been able to meet this standard. In this context, the Republic of the Congo believes that a concerted effort must be undertaken by the UN and the Member States to ensure that the mechanisms promoting accountability and transparency within the UN system are continually improved and remain reliable.

The Republic of the Congo his highly cognizant of the efforts undertaken over the past years and decades to improve the UN system. The regular evaluation by the GA of the "Progress towards an accountability system in the United Nations Secretariat" in, inter alia, the resolutions 66/257, 68/264, 69/272, 70/255, 71/283 and 72/303, is an immensely positive and impactful practice, as is the annual issuing of reports on this question by the Secretary General. There have also been clear definitions of accountability by the Secretary General and of transparency by the Economic and Social Counsel (ECOSOC). The Republic of the Congo also strongly supports the efforts to increase financial transparency, including, among other measures, GA resolution 60/260. Additionally, the Republic of the Congo his highly appreciative of the Code of Ethics for the Presidency of the General Assembly on which the three most recent Presidents of the GA have taken their oaths.

The UN system must provide incentive structures which encourage good and ethical behavior of the officials and which avoid conflicts of interest. This lies largely within the purview of the Secretary General, as he is named the chief administration officer by the Charter of the United Nations (UN Charter). The Republic of the Congo requests the Secretary General to continue to promote a culture of self-evaluation and invites all member states to provide the necessary resources and support. The General Assembly should make a concerted effort to establish a framework of accountability throughout the UN system. Such a framework should include definitions of accountability, transparency and other key terms that are accepted by the entire UN system. It should further incentivize the self-evaluation of officials and the reporting of observed misconduct by other officials, whilst disincentivizing all forms of unethical behavior and corruption. The Republic of the Congo is looking forward to the proposals of all other Member States as to how accountability and transparency within the UN system can be ensured.

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

Violence against women, including domestic and sexual violence, is still a problem for the Republic of the Congo, as it is quite prevalent, especially in the areas that were most affected by the civil wars. Most violence occurs within the family, with more than half of all victims being underage. Unfortunately, many cases are never reported to law enforcement and therefore go unpunished. This also includes occasional cases of female genital mutilation, which, although illegal, is still practiced by some communities. The Republic of the Congo also has a very high fertility rate for girls aged 15-19, in part due to 27% of girls being married by the age of 18, and while the primary completion rate is higher for girls than it is for boys, about 25% fewer women than men enroll in tertiary education. The Republic of the Congo is highly concerned by this situation, as it is not only a personal tragedy for the victims of gender-based violence, but also great obstacle for the economic development the Republic of the Congo so desperately needs.

In recent years the Republic of the Congo has undertaken various efforts to improve the legal status of the victims domestic and sexual violence and has cooperated closely with various Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), including AZUR development and the Association of Women Lawyers in the Congo, to that end. The ratio of female-to-male labor force participation has been brought up to 92.3%, and more than 90% of births in the Republic of the Congo are now attended by skilled health staff. Furthermore, the Republic of the Congo has signed and ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, also known as the Maputo Protocol, of the African Union and is actively participating in the African Women's Decade (2010-2020).The Republic of the Congo also fully supports the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180), GA resolution 64/177, which called on Member States to empower women, and other measures taken by the UN to eliminate violence and discrimination against women. Furthermore, the Republic of the Congo is deeply committed to goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aiming to achieve gender equality and empower

women and girls.

The Republic of the Congo is convinced that all Member States should make the prevention of violence against women a state priority. Education must be the primary tool to prevent violence against women. This includes the education of women about their rights and the services that are provided by governments and NGOs, as well as the education of men to recognize and halt violence against women. Additionally, responses need to be multisectoral in concept and all services provided need to be broadly available. The Republic of the Congo invites all Member States to share their best practices on this issue, to increase their efforts regarding its resolution, and to provide support to those Member States who need it. The Republic of the Congo is looking forward to a constructive conversation with all Member States.