**Delegation from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**
*Position Paper for the General Assembly*

The issues before the General Assembly are: Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development and Disaster Risk Reduction. These topics play an important role in the aftermath of a pandemic that has struck the whole planet. The United Kingdom, which in the words of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II "will not lie down and accept defeat but is all the more determined to struggle for a better future" is looking forward to constructive discussions.

## I.     Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development

The world is becoming more and more connected, and digitalization enables the international community to work more closely towards sustainable economic and financial development. However, times and times again this collaboration is being disturbed by cyber-attacks conducted by state actors and criminal groups which are often acting with implicit approval of a national government. Such attacks cause significant financial loss, intellectual property theft and psychological distress. They also disturb services and assets and bear a great risk for critical national infrastructure, democratic institutions, and media. In 2021, ransomware became the most significant cyberthreat facing the United Kingdom. These kinds of attacks continue to be especially damaging during the COVID-19 pandemic. Cybercriminals have shifted their operations to steal vaccine and medical research, and to undermine nations already hampered by the crisis. So far, the International Community has done extensive work and has come up with the framework of international law and voluntary non-binding norms to protect cybersecurity. The United Kingdom is an open and democratic society and we apply these values in all areas including cyberspace. Nevertheless, it is the lack of implementation of these rules and norms that hinder sustainable economic and financial development. Since 2016 when the UK's National Cyber Security Strategy was first established, we have been pioneers in building resilience against cyberattacks. As Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth we are working with all the 53 Commonwealth Nations to further advance our common vision for a free, open, inclusive, and secure cyberspace by improving cybersecurity competence and co-operation.

The United Kingdom welcomes the *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* (2000) which commits member states to extradition, mutual legal assistance and law enforcement cooperation and the promotion of training and technical assistance. However, viewing the changes in the digital landscape in the last 22 years, the document is partly outdated. We welcome the *Outcome Document of the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Overall Review of the Implementation of the Outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society* (2015) and want to highlight the important role it attributes to international law, especially the Charta of the United Nations. The United Kingdom also supports the call for an intensified cooperation and recognizes the challenge that states, and especially developing countries, face in this regard. We highlight the work done by the *Open-Ended Working Group* (OEWG) in their Final Substantive Report (2021) regarding international law and the call for all states to deepen their understanding of how international law applies to the use of ICTs. We consider it important for States to individually go further in their understanding of international law. However, the OEWG so far has not urged Member States to develop national cybersecurity strategies. We support the paper's position on voluntary norms being able to prevent conflict. Still, the United Kingdom opposes the agreement on developing further norms in the future. Out priority is universalizing and implementing the norms the international community has already agreed on and we are not convinced new ones are needed. Lastly, said document does not provide in depth strategies for states, especially those who lack resources, on how they can best work on their national strategies and implement norms.

The United Kingdom wants to focus on the proper implementation of the existing framework of international law and voluntary non-binding norms. For states to better work on their individual positions, national strategies and to facilitate understanding between nations we need to improve collaboration. For this the United Kingdom proposes the creation of the "UN-Multi database" with best practice guidance on implementation administered by the OEWG. We believe that a multi-stakeholder approach will best serve the aims of increasing security and stability as well as promoting economic and social progress. The information in the database should therefore on the one hand focus on best practice guidance that can be

shared with Nation's industries. They need easily accessible information on how to increase industry standards, protect themselves and what to do in case of a cyberattack. Secondly, information on how to increase awareness in civil society for the importance of norms for a Sate's cybersecurity should be shared in the base since it is crucial for proper execution of norms. Lastly, for states to develop their own national strategies they need to conduct a self-assessment. UN-Multi will provide member states with the information needed for this process.

## II.      Disaster Risk Reduction

There is no doubt that climate change is the biggest challenge humanity is facing today. The last few years have brought to us some of most devasting natural disasters the planet has ever seen. We are particularly concerned for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDC), including almost 60% of our fellow Commonwealth members, which face an existential threat from climate change and associated natural disaster. There is a clear moral imperative for developed economies to help those who stand to lose most from the consequences of man-made climate change. To adequately plan and respond to natural disasters caused by climate change, reliable data is needed. It is often hard to find, understand and apply to decision-making. Both private and public sector decision-makers need accessible, credible, and relevant climate information to increase resilience to the more intense and frequent weather extremes. Especially those countries that suffer the most from climate change and therefore urgently need a well-functioning forecast system lack the resources and expertise to collect the needed data. The United Kingdom sees itself obligated to slow down climate change and help those in need. Through our International Climate Finance Fund, we are supporting cleaner economic growth and have helped over 21 million people prepare for the risk of increased droughts and floods. The UK-led Centre for Global Disaster Protection is working closely with developing countries to help them strengthen their response to climate change.

The United Kingdom reiterates the Conference Statement of the Third World Climate Conference (2009) which first decided on the creation of a Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS). It helps ensure that every country and every climate-sensitive sector of society is well equipped and has access to climate prediction and information service. The Implementation of the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction* (2015) is an important step in finding international responses to climate change related risk. The United Kingdom wants to especially highlight the importance of placing science and technology at the heart of the *Sendai Framework*. We welcome the work of the *United Nations Statistics Division* (UNSD) who have developed a global set of climate change statistics and indicators tailored for all countries. While standardized data is important it is still difficult for a lot of countries to carry out the needed research. We want to highlight the findings of *Plan A* in their report on the Implications of Data Gaps in Climate Science stating that there are still approximately 100 countries mostly in the global south that do not have the resources to produce reliable data that allows to predict the impact of climate change. This problem will potentially only grow given that countries will over the next years transition to the more extensive reporting requirements under the *Paris Agreement's* (2015) Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF). We want to highlight the *World Meteorological Congress'* Resolution (2019) which emphasized the importance of the GFCS and made the *Climate Coordination Panel* the oversight and implementation mechanism to better perform in the future. However, the United Kingdom is concerned that this has not been the case viewing that for example progress reports for SIDS have not been submitted in seven years.

To make climate change statics available to everyone the United Kingdom proposes a relaunch of the GFCS focused on end-users needs. For one the website needs to be revised and updated with the newest projects and facts. In its current form users, researchers and climate service providers cannot obtain needed information. Secondly, while preserving the well-planned structure and areas of action of the GFCS the climate data that is produced on a global level needs to be better implemented on a regional level though regional climate centres. These will assure that everyone has access to the latest products and help navigate the patchwork of climate data by providing officially endorsed local climate models. Capacity development will underpin all the activities so that States can adapt to generate tailored climate services. The main source for GFCS funding will remain the Member's contributions to the GFCS Trust Fund while also focusing on further attracting actors to support the project as it has been done in the past.