



**Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
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Statement

by

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At the

**High-level open debate entitled
“Maintaining International Peace and Security in Cyberspace”**

United Nations Security Council

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Madam President,

We would like to express our appreciation to the Estonian presidency for its initiative to hold today's high-level open debate on a topic that is critically important, for taking stock of the Security Council's performance in its task of maintaining international peace and security. Let me also express my appreciation to all of today's briefers for their insightful presentations.

In the contemporary world, cyberspace touches nearly every part of our daily lives. ICT's role in enabling economic and social benefits is clear. Yet, despite these benefits, the world must remain cognizant of the serious ICT problems that exists. The global ICT environment is facing a dramatic increase in the malicious use of ICTs by State and non-State actors. To be sure, the misuse of ICTs poses a risk for all States and has the potential to negatively impact international peace and security. It is therefore imperative that we build on an earlier commitment to generate confidence-building measures that enhance international peace and security and increase cooperation, transparency, predictability, and stability among Member States in this field.

An open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful ICT environment is essential for all and requires effective cooperation among States to reduce risks to international peace and security. Additionally, other actors with different capacities and capabilities from across different sectors at all levels of the global ICT chain, have a key role in ensuring cybersecurity. We must explore possibilities for further capacity building and technical assistance resources. The United Nations needs to enhance assistance to Member States and further help ensure coherence of efforts among the range of United Nations entities engaging in cyberspace. These efforts should be tied into the Organization's broader goals.

Despite our many challenges as a Small Island Developing State, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has taken concrete steps to improve its ability to tackle the scourge of cybercrime. Two laws, the Electronic Evidence Act (2004) and the Electronic Transactions Act (2007), underpin a basic legislative framework for cybersecurity in the country. In August of 2016, lawmakers passed the Cybercrime Bill 2016 into law, thus providing the country with substantive and procedural law to be able to deal with cybercrime more effectively. We are also committed to our regional cybersecurity agreements within the OAS and CARICOM.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and further disruption due to our recent volcanic eruption, schools within our country have switched to remote education, as is the case all over the world. With thousands of children receiving tablets from the government to facilitate this transition, there has been increased volumes of internet use and screen time. Considering this, the Ministry of Education and National Reconciliation has embarked on a #GoCyberSmart campaign to promote cyber safety. The campaign is an awareness-building initiative to empower students to make the right digital decisions. The three focus areas are information security, hardware safety and navigating safely online.

The importance of information exchange amongst member states and regional and international organizations are essential for ensuring stability and to prevent escalations of cybersecurity incidents. Moreover, we call on member states to remain committed to international law and the framework for responsible State behaviour in cyberspace.

In our effort to advance responsible State behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international peace and security, we must be guided by the assessments and recommendations contained in the consensus Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) reports in 2010, 2013, 2015 and the most recent in 2021, as well as the conclusions and recommendations of the final report of the UN Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG).

To conclude, failure to agree on the rules of engagement, policy norms, and international cooperation mechanisms for a peaceful ICT environment would only yield new sources of instability and conflict. In cyberspace, we encourage all actors in the international community to comply with their international legal obligations including the respect of sovereignty and political independence as enshrined in the UN Charter, and the principles for peaceful dispute settlement in the same manner as in the physical world. The urgent drive to maintain international peace and security in cyberspace must never stop.

Thank you.