

Statement by the Centre for International Law (CIL), National University of Singapore, to the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Information and Communication Technologies 2021-2025, 9th Substantive Session (2-6 Dec 2025)

Dedicated Stakeholder Segment, Wed 4 Dec 2025

On behalf of the Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore (CIL), we thank the Chair for this opportunity to engage in the discussions of the OEWG.

We are encouraged by states' interventions this week which indicate a healthy appetite and indeed hunger to engage in deeper dialogue on the non-exhaustive list of topics referenced in para 39 of the Third Annual Progress Report such as on the issue of thresholds. This is with a view to reaching a common understanding of how international law applies, identifying gaps if any, in interpretation as well as in the existing international legal framework. Several delegations have also emphasized the need for discussion on the application of the identified principles in the context of cyber operations affecting critical infrastructure, electoral processes, cyber-enabled information/disinformation campaigns as well as emerging issues like the cyber-AI nexus.

In this regard, I am pleased to share information on recent initiatives that the CIL has convened or supported, which can support states on this journey. In Sept 24, we supported the 3rd Annual Symposium on Cyber and International Law in Washington DC on the theme "Cyber and Information Conflict: The International Law Implications of Convergence". The symposium explored the implications of the evolving realm of information conflict with an attendant convergence of cyber and information operations. This raises critical questions across the spectrum of war and peace including, among others, the law of state responsibility and international human rights. The recording of the session is expected to be available on the conference website in due course and offers a useful resource for States. <https://www.american.edu/wcl/impact/initiatives-programs/techlaw/events/future-conflict-the-international-law-of-cyber-and-information-convergence.cfm>

In Oct 24, in collaboration with the University of Exeter, we hosted a closed door regional workshop on the practical aspects of developing national positions in the application of international law in cyber (handbook project). Just last week, we convened a closed door dialogue on international law in cyberspace, where we engaged in a probing exchange on the issues under consideration in the OEWG. Engaging a cross regional group of cyber policy officials, legal advisors, and academia in a “safe space” is, we suggest, key to unlocking the door towards common understanding.

Turning to the subject of regular institutional dialogue, the Centre for International Law is committed to continue engaging constructively and contributing meaningfully to the process, in particular on the question of how international law applies to the use of ICTs by States, while fully respecting that it is for States to evaluate the inputs provided by stakeholders and to decide on the substantive matters thereto.

We are very appreciative of the dedicated stakeholder sessions that have been arranged over the course of the OEWG sessions. As the OEWG meeting evolves to a future permanent mechanism, it is timely and appropriate to reflect on how the stakeholder engagement process can also evolve.

To that end, we support calls by others that stakeholders be permitted to intervene in a thematic manner, eg in line with any future dedicated thematic groups to be established as part of the future permanent mechanism. This will enable stakeholders to offer timely and ultimately more impactful and effective inputs to the thematic issue at hand. Equally important, this format will in our view, better position delegations and stakeholders to engage dynamically in a more inclusive and interactive manner. We appreciate that this may call for innovative meeting structures and are confident that under the Chair’s guidance, this can be achieved.

Stakeholders can contribute to the future permanent mechanisms in accordance with their respective area of expertise and mandates. In relation to international law, other than supporting capacity-building, stakeholders can, among others:

- Participate as independent experts in working groups established under the future permanent mechanism;
- Convene briefings and analysis of how international law applies to the use of ICTs in specific fact scenarios;
- Provide independent feedback and expert assessment of proposals that have been made;
- Information sharing on relevant international law activities undertaken;
- Disseminate research outputs and resource materials;
- Convene (in flexible formats and composition) dialogues to build mutual understanding, and potentially facilitate the development of additional layers of understandings or common positions on the application of international law on states' use of ICTs.

These initiatives can also take place at the domestic and regional level with a clear pathway to feed relevant reports and outcomes to the future regular institutional dialogue.

In closing, the CIL welcomes opportunities to collaborate with delegations and other stakeholders on issues of international law and look forward to contributing to the remaining sessions of this OEWG and the future permanent mechanism. Thank you Chair.

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