Excellencies, distinguished speakers and guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to welcome you to this Arria-formula meeting of the UN Security Council and to address you from Tallinn, the capital of Estonia.

We are glad to be able to hold this meeting. As a global community, many have struggled to find ways to stay connected with colleagues, friends and family through video conferences, calls and other digital ways.

For Estonia, the pandemic has brought an evolution to our already very digital lives. My government was paperless before, and now we have learned to be even more connected virtually.

I am grateful to all the doctors, nurses and other medical staff who have consulted as many patients as possible from distance using a mix of digital technologies. During the public health emergency patients were able avoid visiting doctors for prescriptions because over 95% of medical prescriptions are issued online in Estonia.
And while the school buildings were closed, my children continued studying over our e-school platforms, with all classes running smoothly during the last months.

If we could not rely on digital platforms and smart technological solutions, we could not ensure that states, their critical service providers or international organizations are able to continue performing their duties.

And we could not have met today.

I am pleased to open this virtual debate today on a topic that is close to all Estonians, and also netizens worldwide. Today we are holding the first meeting of UN Security Council members that is entirely dedicated to the subject of Cyber stability and advancing responsible state behaviour in cyberspace.

Dear Participants,

The COVID19 crisis has put extra pressure on our critical services in terms of cybersecurity. Many of our everyday functions and operations have moved online. Therefore, the need for a secure and functioning cyberspace is more pressing than ever.

Estonia joins those strongly condemning cyber-attacks targeting hospitals, medical research facilities and other essential infrastructure, particularly during this global pandemic. Those attacks are unacceptable. It will be important to hold the offenders responsible for their behaviour.
This is why we strongly support implementing the normative framework of cyber stability to ensure that cyberspace remains protected and functional.

Allow me to highlight three major elements of how to safeguard cyberspace:

First, the United Nations Member States have agreed long ago that existing international law applies also in cyberspace. We hold the strong view that existing international law provides comprehensive guidance for state behaviour regardless of the domain. By following this simple principle, the behavior of states in cyberspace can become more transparent and predictable.

Second, Estonia considers that a framework for cyber stability and conflict prevention has already been established by existing international law, voluntary norms of responsible state behavior as well as confidence building measures. It is now important to implement this framework. Regional efforts will be essential for conflict prevention and increasing transparency and predictability.

The third guiding principle for Estonia is to recognize the importance of capacity building in promoting stability in cyberspace.

Globally, there are vast differences between states regarding their capacity to face cyber threats. Here we all have a responsibility to mobilize our expertise and resources. Over the last decade, Estonia has been sharing its best practices on advancing e-governance and building
cyber resilience with many partner nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. During the global pandemic, it is more important than ever to raise awareness about cyber threats and share best practices. It would be also crucial to recognize the role of the private sector in providing cyber resilience.

We would also like to stress the contribution made by all other stakeholders, including academia and civil society, in promoting cyber stability.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Estonia continues to support an open, free and stable cyberspace where the rule of law fully applies, and human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected. We gather today – although digitally – at a crucial moment. Preserving an open and secure cyberspace is our common responsibility – not only during the current crisis, but also far, far beyond.

Thank you.