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Remarks by Mr. Aougui NIANDOU,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Niger to the United Nations, on Cyber Stability, Conflict Prevention and Capacity Building

New York, May 22nd, 2020

Thank you, Mr. President,

Niger would like to thank the Permanent Missions of Estonia, Belgium, Dominican Republic, Indonesia, and Kenya for organizing this timely conversation.

We would like to also extent our thanks to the briefers for their substantial and educating presentations.

Mr. President,

The advent of the digital age and its rapid expansion have certainly offered our societies immeasurable social and economic opportunities and benefits. Almost every aspect of our lives has been greatly impacted by it.

As this pandemic of covid -19 has taught us, what we call the virtual world, that is the internet and cyberspace, is now firmly part of the real world. Advances in Information and Communications Technologies have now enabled both state and non-state actors to engage in cyber activity to achieve objectives, "whether related to protest and revolution, crime, terrorism, espionage or military operations".

In fact, cybercrime is as much a concern for international peace and security today as terrorism and illicit drug trafficking. Increasingly, more sophisticated tools are enabling those actors to attack the control systems of infrastructures that are critical to the functioning of our states. It has allowed terrorist groups to recruit and spread their propaganda. Additionally, these tools, combined with widespread uncertainty about the rules that would govern the behavior of states in cyberspace, are increasing the risk of conflict between our nations.

It is therefore of crucial importance that we find common ground to address these challenges by affirming and clarifying the application of international law to the conduct of States in cyberspace and by recommending confidence-building measures. It would be beneficial in this sense to consider the adoption of an

international Convention in which a single definition of cybercrime would be unanimously agreed upon.

The African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection is such an attempt. Its aim is to establish a 'credible framework for cybersecurity in Africa through the organization of electronic transactions, protection of personal data, promotion of cyber security, e-governance and combating cybercrime.'

For its part, Niger has, since 2003, introduced in the legal code, provisions on offences relating to computer science in consideration of the risks presented by the abnormal use of digital technology.

Also, in the face of the acceleration of innovations observed in the field, giving rise to new forms of crime that constitute a vector of potential and permanent risks for the security of States, for the conduct of business, online transactions and especially for the privacy of citizens, Niger adopted in 2019 a law on Cybercrime.

Mr. President,

The ongoing digital transformation will not provide the desired social and economic benefits unless all countries, including developing nations have access to a secure and trusted Cyberspace. However the establishment of a legal framework for cybersecurity should not be a license to reign in the fundamental freedom and human rights, rather it should embody our commitment to the respect for the rights of citizens, including the protection of private life, guaranteed under the fundamental text of domestic laws and protected by international human rights Conventions and Treaties.

Nonetheless, when talking about the information technology and the access thereof, whether by individuals or by Government, a clear attention must be given to the digital divide that exist within and among countries. If in some developed countries, access to internet is guaranteed and is part of the day-to-day life, the situation is totally different in developing countries, like in Africa.

We would like to commend the United Nations efforts in trying to reduce this gap by fostering cooperation in innovation science and technology among member states. We equally call all countries advanced in this domain to make capacity building in ICT one of their main axes of their technical cooperation with developing countries. At this juncture, I would like to commend Estonia for brilliantly leading the way, by exporting its vast e-governance know how to partner countries, including Niger.

Mr. President,

To conclude, we would like to reiterate that the efforts to promote cyber stability and conflict prevention against the backdrop of emerging cyber threats requires the involvement of all, from public sector actors such as states local communities, to private sector enterprises, the media, civil society organizations, and training and research institutions, and we encourage their involvement.

I thank you.