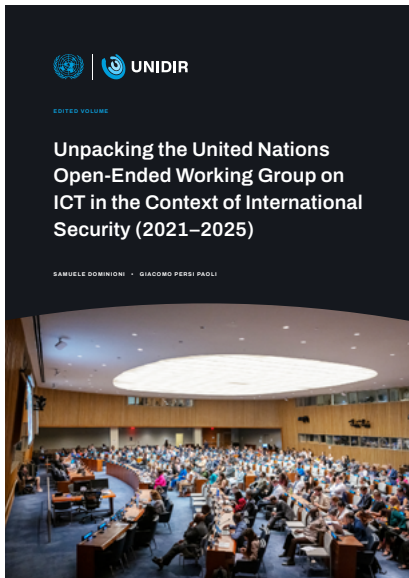




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# Regular Institutional Dialogue

Pavel Mráz and Lenka Filipová

## 1. Introduction

“Regular institutional dialogue” (RID) refers to continued and structured intergovernmental discussions under United Nations auspices on developments in the field of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in the context of international security. While the earlier reports of the Groups of Governmental Experts (GGEs) and Open-Ended Working Groups (OEWG) on ICT security did not formally define the term, RID progressively became shorthand for the efforts of United Nations Member States to institutionalize regular, inclusive and sustained United Nations dialogue on the subject.

The permanent institutionalization of discussions on ICT security at the United Nations represents a central outcome of the OEWG 2021–2025. While much of the OEWG’s work focused on deepening the cumulative and evolving Framework of Responsible State Behaviour in the Use of ICTs (referred to simply as “the Framework”), the concurrent effort to a permanent process became arguably as significant. The adoption, by consensus, of the OEWG’s final report in July 2025 included the modalities for the establishment of a Global Mechanism on International ICT Security,<sup>1</sup> marking the transition from time-bound working groups to a standing intergovernmental platform.

This chapter examines how discussions on RID evolved during the mandate of the OEWG on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025 and culminated in the establishment of a permanent United Nations mechanism on ICT security. It situates these negotiations within the broader trajectory of United Nations discussions on international ICT security and traces how support for competing institutional models eventually coalesced around a consensus-based, single-track Global Mechanism on ICT Security. In doing so, the chapter shows how institutional design became both a reflection of and a response to the evolution of United Nations multilateral discussions in the field of international ICT security.

The following sections trace this evolution, examine the main themes and subthemes that structured the RID negotiations, and highlight key insights from the negotiation process. Specifically, Section 2 provides a chronological account of how States converged around key institutional design features of the Global Mechanism. Section 3 then analyses five design elements that structured the negotiations – the purpose and objective, guiding principles, scope and functions, structure, and modalities of RID – as well as related subthemes that surfaced under each of those themes. The chapter closes in Section 4 by highlighting key insights and lessons learned from the negotiations that are not covered by the official outcome documents, as well as their implications for the work of the Global Mechanism.

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1 General Assembly, resolution [80/16](#), 2025.

This chapter focuses on negotiations conducted in the OEWG 2021–2025 and the consensus outcomes reflected in its annual progress reports (APRs) and final report. The discussions and outcomes of the March 2026 organizational session of the Global Mechanism are not reflected here. As a result, certain procedural and operational issues discussed here may have evolved further in practice beyond the scope of this analysis. Throughout the chapter, visual representations are included to facilitate understanding the evolution of discussion on RID as well as the agreed negotiation cycles and operational structure of the Global Mechanism.

## 1.1. The road to the OEWG 2021–2025

Discussions on this topic predated the OEWG; the first reference to RID with broad participation of States dates back to the final report of the GGE 2014–2015.<sup>2</sup> Between 2018 and 2021, two concurrent processes on international ICT security were established pursuant to separate General Assembly resolutions: a sixth GGE, composed of a limited number of States,<sup>3</sup> and the first OEWG, open to all States.<sup>4</sup> Both processes had a two-year mandate and adopted consensus reports in 2021.<sup>5</sup> However, this dual-track configuration raised questions of coherence, efficiency and allocation of scarce resources, particularly for smaller States. These factors would later contribute to calls from many States for an inclusive, single-track process.

During this dual GGE–OEWG period, calls for a permanent and action-oriented mechanism emerged. Most notable was the proposal for a Programme of Action (PoA), which was envisioned as a standing United Nations platform to facilitate the implementation of the Framework.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, other delegations favoured continuation of discussions within another time-limited OEWG-type body, albeit potentially with a longer mandate.<sup>7</sup> As discussions on a PoA and other proposals were introduced and debated within the OEWG 2019–2021, the General Assembly adopted a resolution establishing a second OEWG with a five-year duration.<sup>8</sup> The establishment, by vote, of a second time-bound OEWG (which was

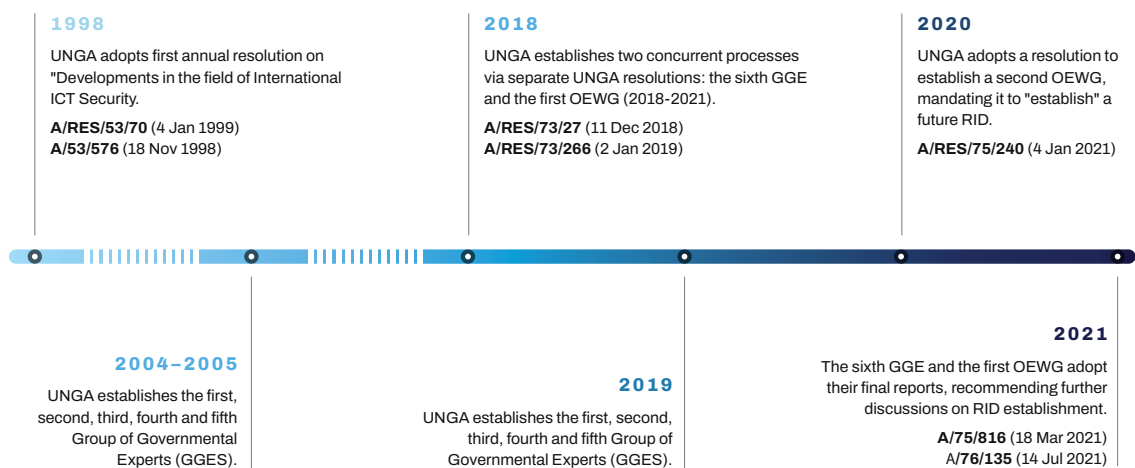
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- 2 General Assembly, Report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, [A/70/174](#), 2015, paragraph 18.
  - 3 General Assembly, resolution [73/266](#), 2018, paragraph 3.
  - 4 General Assembly, resolution [73/27](#), 2018, paragraph 5.
  - 5 General Assembly, Open-Ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, Draft Final Substantial Report, [A/AC.290/2021/CRP.2](#), 2021; General Assembly, Report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security, [A/76/135](#), 2021.
  - 6 “The Future of Discussions on ICTs and Cyberspace at the UN”, Submitted by France et al., 2020, <https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/joint-contribution-PoA-future-of-cyber-discussions-at-the-un-2-2-2020.pdf>.
  - 7 General Assembly, First Committee, “Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security”, Revised draft resolution submitted by Belarus, Burundi, Cambodia, China, Cuba, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malawi, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of); Zimbabwe, [A/C.1/75/L.8/Rev.1](#), 2020.
  - 8 General Assembly, resolution [75/240](#), 2021.

opposed by some delegations)<sup>9</sup> together with concurrent proposals for a permanent PoA<sup>10</sup> indicated that there was not yet consensus on whether future RID should continue through time-bound processes or transition to a standing, permanent United Nations mechanism.

The final report of the OEWG 2018–2021, adopted by consensus, recommended the continuation of RID under United Nations auspices and encouraged further consideration of proposals for future institutional arrangements, including the PoA.<sup>11</sup> When the successor OEWG 2021–2025 was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 75/240, the mandate explicitly included the task “to establish, under the auspices of the United Nations, regular institutional dialogue with the broad participation of States”.<sup>12</sup> Establishment of a future United Nations process on international ICT security was thus embedded within the mandate of the OEWG 2021–2025 from the outset. However, the form that such a dialogue would take remained open to negotiation.

FIGURE 1.

## Timeline of institutionalization of United Nations discussion on international ICT security, foundational period and first OEWG / 6th GGE, 1998–2021<sup>13</sup>



9 Draft resolution A/C.1/75/L.8/Rev.1 was adopted with 104 votes for, 50 against and 20 abstentions. See General Assembly, “Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security”, Report of the First Committee, [A/75/394](#), 2020, paragraph 10(c).

10 “The Future of Discussions on ICTs and Cyberspace at the UN”, Submitted by France et al.

11 [A/AC.290/2021/CRP.2](#), paragraphs 75–78.

12 Resolution [75/240](#), paragraph 1.

13 Acronyms used in the figure: GGE - Group of Governmental Experts, OEWG - Open-ended Working Group, POA - Programme of Action, RID- Regular Institutional Dialogue, UNGA - United Nations General Assembly; UNGA established five GGES between 2003 and 2015 through the following resolutions and decisions: first GGE (A/RES/58/32, 18 December 2003); second GGE (A/RES/63/37, 9 January 2009); third GGE (A/RES/66/24, 13 December 2011); fourth GGE (A/RES/68/243, 9 January 2014); fifth GGE (A/72/327, 30 December 2015).

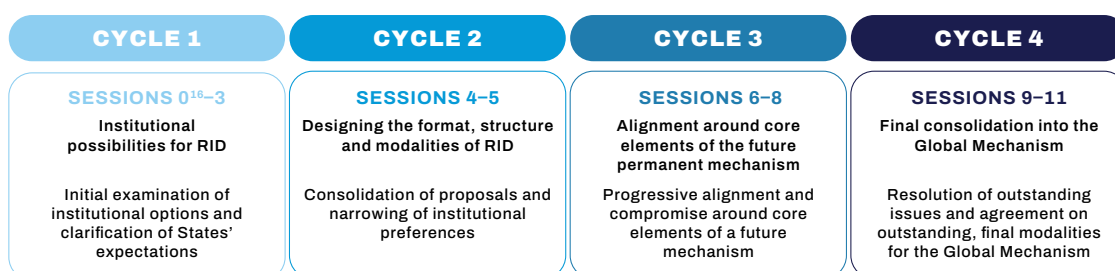


Katherine Prizeman, Izumi Nakamitsu and Burhan Gafoor prior to the 10th substantive session of the open-ended working group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021–2025, New York, 2025. Credit: UN Photo / Loey Felipe.

## 2. Evolution of the discussion

The evolution of discussions on regular institutional dialogue within the OEWG 2021–2025 reflects a gradual movement from States proposing various, and sometimes divergent, RID proposals to convergence around consensus elements that would come to define the architecture of the Global Mechanism. As outlined above, the second OEWG did not operate in a political vacuum. It functioned as a single-track process following the experience of parallel OEWG and GGE tracks in 2018–2021. At the same time, both the OEWG and GGE processes had issued recommendations on establishing RID, including guiding principles that informed subsequent discussions within the second OEWG.<sup>14</sup> These consensus outcomes, endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly, affirmed the need for continued regular dialogue, recommended an inclusive, transparent, consensus-driven and results-based process, and noted various RID proposals, including the PoA.<sup>15</sup>

This section traces how convergence around a concrete institutional architecture for RID evolved across four negotiation cycles of the OEWG 2021–2025 (see Figure 3).



Together, these phases show how States translated broad agreement on the need for RID into a consensus outcome by navigating varying institutional proposals and gradually converging on the structure and format of a single permanent Global Mechanism.

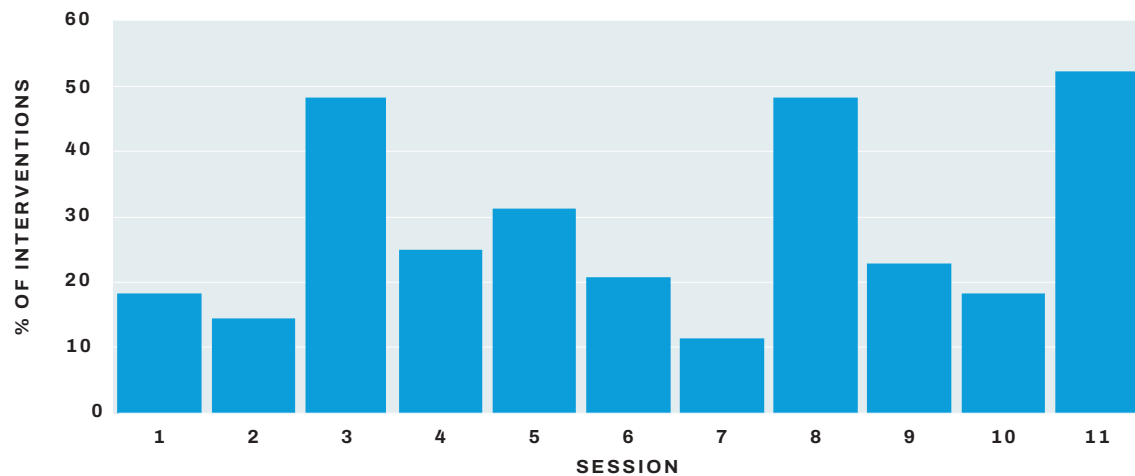
14 [A/AC.290/2021/CRP.2](#), paragraphs 75–79; [A/76/135](#), paragraph 96.

15 [A/AC.290/2021/CRP.2](#), paragraphs 68–79; [A/76/135](#), paragraph 97.

16 Organisational Session held on 1–2 June 2021 at UNHQ in NYC.

FIGURE 2

## Proportion of state interventions on RID topics by session<sup>17</sup>



### 2.1. Cycle 1 – Institutional possibilities for RID

From the outset of the OEWG, States diverged on how its mandate to establish RID should be realized. The main divergence centred on whether this should be accomplished through the PoA proposal or by a continuation of the OEWG format.

These competing visions quickly manifested in a polarizing debate over the inclusion of non-governmental stakeholders in the second OEWG’s deliberations, shaped in part by the experience of the first OEWG, where the vast majority of stakeholders had been prevented from participating in formal sessions. This debate led to the failure of the organizational session to adopt the OEWG’s programme of work. While the substance of the proposed programme of work was not itself contested in principle during the organizational session, its adoption would have effectively concluded the session, making any reopening or renegotiation of modalities governing stakeholder participation within this OEWG more difficult at a later stage. Agreement was only reached at the second substantive session, following a proposal on modalities for stakeholder participation by the Chair.<sup>18</sup> This carefully balanced compromise resolved the immediate procedural impasse by retaining the non-objection procedure for stakeholder accreditation while encouraging States to apply objections judiciously and in a transparent manner.<sup>19</sup> However, the episode highlighted underlying

17 Proportions reflect state interventions matched against at least two key terms from a thematic dictionary search of topics relating to rules, norms and principles.

18 Chairperson OEWG 2021–2025, Letter, 22 April 2022, <https://documents.unoda.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Letter-from-OEWG-Chair-22-April-2022.pdf>.

19 The Chair’s compromise modalities retained the non-objection procedure for stakeholder accreditation while introducing additional transparency and inclusivity elements. Accredited stakeholders were permitted to attend formal sessions, make oral statements during a dedicated stakeholder session and submit written inputs, while States were encouraged to apply objections judiciously. Objecting States could, on a voluntary basis, provide the Chair with the general basis for their objections, which the Chair could share with other Member States upon request. The modalities also reaffirmed the intergovernmental character of the OEWG, specifying that negotiations and decision-making remained the exclusive prerogative of Member States.

differences among States on key features of future RID and foreshadowed the continued sensitivity of stakeholder modalities in subsequent RID negotiations.

Apart from stakeholder inclusion, several other legacy considerations from previous processes informed the discussion. First, the time-limited nature of successive OEWG and GGE mandates required periodic General Assembly negotiations to define new processes. While such negotiations reflected the sovereign prerogatives of Member States, they also introduced uncertainty and led, at times, to divisive votes within the General Assembly. A permanent mechanism could ensure continuity without the need for recurrent mandate renewals by the General Assembly. Second, the dual-track experience of the OEWG and GGE of 2018–2021 and the General Assembly voting over competing resolutions<sup>20</sup> underscored the value of a single, inclusive forum. Consolidation into a single-track process was therefore suggested as both a practical and a political objective of future RID.<sup>21</sup>

During this initial stage, delegations advanced diverging visions for future RID and discussions remained focused on the exchange of positions and preferences around various proposals. Some delegations supported the adoption of a permanent Programme of Action.<sup>22</sup> Others preferred maintaining the time-bound OEWG format.<sup>23</sup> In early debates, one delegation highlighted the need to ensure that future RID had flexibility, suggesting that periodic reviews could serve to reconcile the permanent nature of RID with the need for adaptability by allowing the mechanism to evolve over time.<sup>24</sup> Early debates around the structure and modalities of RID were also closely tied to proposals concerning its substantive functions: that is, whether the future mechanism should prioritize implementation of existing commitments, further develop norms and international law, elaborate new legally binding obligations, or pursue work on all pillars of the Framework in an integrated, policy-oriented and cross-cutting nature.

Initial debates within the OEWG concerning the name of the mechanism became closely intertwined with these differing orientations. Whether described as a “Programme of Action”, a renewed OEWG-type process, or more generically as “regular institutional dialogue” or a “future mechanism”, a delegation’s choice of terminology conveyed whether the intended emphasis was on implementation, further development or a balance of both approaches. For some delegations, giving a name to RID functioned as an expression of underlying visions for the mechanism’s purpose and objectives.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, many delegations avoided

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20 The OEWG 2018–2019 was created by General Assembly resolution [73/27](#), adopted on 5 December 2018 with 119 votes in favour, 46 against and 14 abstentions; the GGE 2018–2019 was created by General Assembly resolution [73/266](#), adopted on 22 December 2018 with 138 votes in favour, 12 against and 16 abstentions. See General Assembly, Official Records, [A/73/PV.45](#), 2018, 4; General Assembly, Official Record, [A/73/PV.65](#), 2019, 13–14.

21 For example, Costa Rica (session 1, meeting 9).

22 For example, European Union (session 1, meeting 9); Argentina (session 1, meeting 9); Egypt (session 2, meeting 9); Republic of Korea (session 3, meeting 8). On the Programme of Action, see also “Working Paper for a Programme of Action (PoA) to Advance Responsible State Behavior in the Use of ICTs in the Context of International Security”, Submitted by a group of States, 2021, <https://documents.unoda.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Working-paper-on-the-proposal-for-a-Cyber-PoA.pdf>.

23 For example, Russia (session 1, meeting 9); Iran (session 2, meeting 9).

24 For example, Japan (session 2, meeting 9).

25 For example, France (session 1, meeting 9); Switzerland (session 2, meeting 9); Egypt (session 2, meeting 9).

explicit endorsement of any single institutional label, instead supporting elements drawn from different proposals.<sup>26</sup>

The first APR reflected this exploratory stage. It acknowledged the importance of continuity in United Nations discussions and encouraged further exchange of views on RID among States.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, the APR did not reflect any agreed design features of the future mechanism, with core political, structural and procedural questions remaining open and subject to future negotiations.

## 2.2. Designing the format, structure and modalities of RID

Between the first and second APRs, the political environment surrounding RID discussions became increasingly difficult. During this period, the General Assembly adopted two resolutions related to RID through votes. One resolution, submitted by the supporters of the PoA,<sup>28</sup> advanced the PoA concept by mandating the Office for Disarmament Affairs to produce a report on possible institutional architecture for the programme based on Member States' input. Through this resolution, the General Assembly also decided to hold a dedicated conference to establish the PoA in 2026, after the end of the OEWG.<sup>29</sup> A second resolution, advanced by the proponents of the OEWG format,<sup>30</sup> reaffirmed support for the OEWG process and called on States to elaborate all proposals, including those on RID, within the OEWG by consensus.<sup>31</sup> The adoption by the General Assembly of both of the proposals<sup>32</sup> related to the means of establishing RID – one within the OEWG and another through a separate conference – raised concerns around the possibility of dual-track processes and intensified calls to ensure a single-track process.<sup>33</sup>

Against this backdrop, discussions within the OEWG began to narrow, with delegations increasingly seeking to reconcile these parallel tracks and avoid a return to dual-process arrangements that marked the period of the first OEWG and sixth GGE. At the same time, the growing preference to further elaborate proposals on RID, including the PoA, within the OEWG and by consensus increasingly shifted attention towards identifying a single institutional framework capable of accommodating elements from across existing proposals.<sup>34</sup>

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26 For example, India (session 1, meeting 9); Pakistan (session 2, meeting 9).

27 General Assembly, First Annual Progress Report of the Open-Ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025, [A/77/275](#), 2022, paragraph 18.

28 Resolution 77/37 was tabled by France and had a total of 74 sponsoring States. The full list of sponsors and additional sponsors is available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3991743?v=pdf>.

29 General Assembly, resolution [77/37](#), 2022.

30 Resolution 77/36 was tabled by the Russian Federation and had a total of 28 sponsoring States. The full list of sponsors and additional sponsors is available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3991885?ln=en&v=pdf>.

31 General Assembly, resolution [77/36](#), 2022.

32 Resolution 77/37 was adopted on 12 December 2022 by 156 votes in favour, 7 against and 14 abstentions. Resolution 77/36 was adopted on 12 December 2022 by 112 votes in favour, 52 against and 8 abstentions. See General Assembly, Official Record, [A/77/PV.46](#), 2022, 6–7.

33 For example, Russia (session 4, meeting 9); Ireland (session 4, meeting 9); South Africa (session 4, meeting 9); India (session 4, meeting 9); Nicaragua (session 4, meeting 10).

34 For example, Iran (session 4, meeting 9); China (session 4, meeting 9); Cuba (session 4, meeting 9); Belgium (session 4, meeting 9); Ireland (session 4, meeting 9); New Zealand (session 5, meeting 5).

A growing number of delegations emphasized the importance of avoiding fragmentation and called for a single inclusive forum under United Nations auspices.<sup>35</sup> While some delegations continued to advance their institutional preferences, including for a Programme of Action or an OEWG-type format,<sup>36</sup> others increasingly focused on describing the features of a future mechanism without explicitly aligning with any one proposal.<sup>37</sup> As a result, discussions began to shift from models perceived as being in competition with one another towards identifying common modalities and selecting features from across proposals that could enjoy broad support.

Building on this shift towards identifying common elements, discussions began to show early convergence around several foundational structural features of a future mechanism. At this stage, these shared and largely uncontested design parameters of future RID featured inclusivity, consensus-based decision-making, complementarity with prior GGE and OEWG outcomes, and operation under the General Assembly. During this period, delegations increasingly spoke in favour of establishing a permanent mechanism.<sup>38</sup> Specifically, discussions began to focus on how a future mechanism could be structured to ensure continuity,<sup>39</sup> flexibility<sup>40</sup> and non-duplication with existing United Nations processes.<sup>41</sup> Although delegations continued to debate substantive prioritization – that is, implementation versus further development – discussions also increasingly focused on practical questions of the mechanism’s institutional design.

The second APR captured this shift from exploratory exchanges and competing proposals towards a more focused discussion on shared structure and format elements of a future mechanism. States agreed to continue to “identify some common elements that could underpin the development of any future mechanism”<sup>42</sup> among existing proposals. At this stage, States also agreed that a future mechanism would be a “single-track, State-led, permanent mechanism under the auspices of the United Nations, reporting to the First Committee”,<sup>43</sup> grounded in consensus reports and aimed at promoting an “open, secure, stable, accessible, peaceful and interoperable ICT environment”.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, states confirmed that the future mechanism would be “open, inclusive, transparent, sustainable and

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35 For example, Brazil (session 4, meeting 9), South Africa (session 4, meeting 9), India (session 4, meeting 9), Nicaragua (session 4, meeting 10), Czechia (session 5, meeting 5); Indonesia (session 5, meeting 5).

36 For example, France (session 4, meeting 9); Egypt (session 4, meeting 9); Russia (session 4, meeting 9); European Union (session 4, meeting 9).

37 For example, Brazil (session 4, meeting 9); Viet Nam (session 4, meeting 9); Ghana (session 4, meeting 10); Philippines (session 5, meeting 5).

38 For example, Russia (session 4, meeting 9); Denmark (session 4, meeting 9); Romania (session 4, meeting 9); Argentina (session 4, meeting 9); Viet Nam (session 4, meeting 9); Republic of Korea (session 4, meeting 9); Israel (session 4, meeting 9); Australia (session 4, meeting 9); Nicaragua (session 4, meeting 9).

39 For example, Côte d’Ivoire (session 4, meeting 9); Russia (session 4, meeting 9); Nicaragua (session 4, meeting 10).

40 For example, Denmark (session 4, meeting 9); France (session 4, meeting 9); Egypt (session 4, meeting 9); United States (session 4, meeting 9); Costa Rica (session 4, meeting 10).

41 For example, Côte d’Ivoire (session 4, meeting 9); Pakistan (session 4, meeting 9); Russia (session 4, meeting 9); Egypt (session 4, meeting 9); Nicaragua (session 4, meeting 10).

42 General Assembly, Report of the Open-Ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025, [A/78/265](#), 2023, paragraph 53.

43 [A/78/265](#), paragraph 55(a).

44 [A/78/265](#), paragraph 55(d).

flexible”<sup>45</sup> and capable of evolving in accordance with States’ needs and in line with developments in the ICT environment. Notably, “flexibility”, which had not gained wide support the previous negotiation cycle, was now supported by many delegations<sup>46</sup> and adopted through the second APR as a key guiding principle of the future mechanism.

## 2.3. Alignment around core elements of the future permanent mechanism

A decisive shift in OEWG deliberations occurred in the period leading up to the third APR. Discussions increasingly centred around specific questions concerning the institutional design of RID, such as functions, structure and modalities. This recalibration was influenced in part by the Chair’s guiding questions,<sup>47</sup> and in part by the report by the Office for Disarmament Affairs mandated by the General Assembly resolution on the PoA.<sup>48</sup> This report, which compiled views from approximately 40 States on future RID, provided a structured overview of States’ existing preferences and areas of convergence across several key design features of future RID, including guiding principles, scope and functions, structure, and modalities. At this stage, many delegations started to explicitly reference their preferences along similar thematic categories in their interventions.<sup>49</sup>

Throughout this period, questions of sequencing and prioritization of specific functions and programmatic priorities of the future mechanism continued to feature in the discussion. Some delegations emphasized functions related to implementation, capacity-building and voluntary reporting.<sup>50</sup> Others underscored the need to preserve space for continued normative and legal development, including the possible elaboration of additional commitments.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, delegations discussed how specific functions could be operationalized within a single process through the creation of dedicated subsidiary bodies or working groups, rather than through parallel or separate processes.<sup>52</sup>

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45 [A/78/265](#), paragraph 55(d).

46 See, for example, Denmark (session 4, meeting 9); France (session 4, meeting 9); Egypt (session 4, meeting 9); United States (session 4, meeting 9); and Costa Rica (session 4, meeting 10).

47 Chairperson OEWG 2021–2025, Letter, 22 November 2023, [https://docs-library.unoda.org/Open-Ended\\_Working\\_Group\\_on\\_Information\\_and\\_Communication\\_Technologies\\_-\\_\\_\(2021\)/Letter\\_from\\_OEWG\\_Chair\\_22\\_November\\_2023.pdf](https://docs-library.unoda.org/Open-Ended_Working_Group_on_Information_and_Communication_Technologies_-__(2021)/Letter_from_OEWG_Chair_22_November_2023.pdf), Annex B, “Revised Non-exhaustive List of Guiding Questions”; Chairperson OEWG 2021–2025, Letter, 20 February 2024, [https://docs-library.unoda.org/Open-Ended\\_Working\\_Group\\_on\\_Information\\_and\\_Communication\\_Technologies\\_-\\_\\_\(2021\)/Letter\\_from\\_OEWG\\_Chair\\_20\\_February\\_2024.pdf](https://docs-library.unoda.org/Open-Ended_Working_Group_on_Information_and_Communication_Technologies_-__(2021)/Letter_from_OEWG_Chair_20_February_2024.pdf), Annex A, “Revised Non-exhaustive List of Guiding Questions”.

48 General Assembly, “Programme of Action to Advance Responsible State Behaviour in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies in the Context of International Security”, Report of the Secretary-General, [A/78/76](#), 2023.

49 For example, European Union (session 6, meeting 9); Egypt (session 6, meeting 10); Cuba (session 6, meeting 10); United States (session 6, meeting 10); Mauritius (session 6, meeting 10).

50 For example, Bangladesh (session 6, meeting 10); Mauritius (session 6, meeting 10).

51 For example, Russia (session 6, meeting 9); Cuba (session 6, meeting 10); China (session 6, meeting 10).

52 For example, Egypt on behalf of the Arab Group (session 6, meeting 10); Cuba (session 6, meeting 10).

**Related discussions focused on the structure and modalities of the mechanism.** Delegations exchanged views on the appropriate number of institutional layers within the mechanism. This included the potential role of a periodic review cycle or conference,<sup>53</sup> the role and frequency of plenary sessions,<sup>54</sup> and the potential establishment and scope of subsidiary bodies or working groups.<sup>55</sup> Some proposals and interventions also addressed leadership arrangements, including how to reflect equitable geographical representation in leadership structures in practice, and the duration of negotiation cycles.<sup>56</sup> Discussions of modalities continued to address stakeholder participation, including the extent and format of engagement.<sup>57</sup> They also touched upon the decision-making procedures and the application of the principle of consensus,<sup>58</sup> including whether certain procedural matters (e.g., stakeholder accreditation) might require alternative decision-making arrangements in specific circumstances. Across these exchanges, delegations increasingly framed their positions in terms of specific modalities, often drawing on and combining features from different proposals, including the PoA and the proposal for a permanent OEWG.<sup>59</sup>

These structured exchanges informed the consolidation of agreed elements on RID in Annex C of the third APR, which captured where States had converged around key “Elements for the Open-Ended Action-Oriented Permanent Mechanism on ICT Security in the Context of International Security” across guiding principles, scope and functions, structure, and modalities.<sup>60</sup> The mechanism’s provisional title itself reflected compromise without aligning the mechanism explicitly with the name of a previously submitted proposal: “Open-Ended” safeguarded universal, inclusive participation and reflected preferences of some delegations for a renewed OEWG-type body; “Action-Oriented” captured the shared aspiration of States to move beyond deliberative formats and integrated the proposed intent of the PoA to focus on advancing implementation in a practical manner. Annex C of the third APR also stabilized agreement across several key design elements of the new mechanism, including the length of its negotiation and review cycles, structured engagement with non-governmental stakeholders, and reporting to its parent body, the General Assembly.

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53 For example, China (session 6, meeting 10); Russia (session 8, meeting 4).

54 For example, China (session 6, meeting 10); France (session 7, meeting 10); United States (session 7, meeting 10).

55 For example, Egypt (session 7, meeting 10).

56 For example, “Concept Paper on a Permanent Decision-Making Open-Ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies”, Submitted by Belarus et al., [https://docs-library.unoda.org/Open-Ended\\_Working\\_Group\\_on\\_Information\\_and\\_Communication\\_Technologies\\_-\\_\\_\(2021\)/ENG\\_Concept\\_paper\\_on\\_a\\_Permanent\\_Decision-making\\_OEWG.pdf](https://docs-library.unoda.org/Open-Ended_Working_Group_on_Information_and_Communication_Technologies_-__(2021)/ENG_Concept_paper_on_a_Permanent_Decision-making_OEWG.pdf), 3; Chairperson OEWG 2021–2025, “Draft Elements”, 2024, [https://docs-library.unoda.org/Open-Ended\\_Working\\_Group\\_on\\_Information\\_and\\_Communication\\_Technologies\\_-\\_\\_\(2021\)/Letter\\_from\\_OEWG\\_Chair\\_1\\_May\\_2024\\_0.pdf](https://docs-library.unoda.org/Open-Ended_Working_Group_on_Information_and_Communication_Technologies_-__(2021)/Letter_from_OEWG_Chair_1_May_2024_0.pdf), paragraph 18(c). See also, for example, El Salvador (session 7, meeting 10).

57 For example, United Kingdom (session 6, meeting 10); Switzerland (session 6, meeting 10); United States (session 7, meeting 10); Netherlands (session 8, meeting 4); Australia (session 8, meeting 4).

58 For example, Brazil on behalf of the IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) Dialogue Forum (session 6, meeting 10); Bangladesh (session 6, meeting 10); Malaysia (session 6, meeting 10); South Africa (session 6, meeting 10); China (session 7, meeting 10); Israel (session 8, meeting 5); United Kingdom (session 8, meeting 7).

59 On the proposal of a permanent OEWG, see “Concept Paper on a Permanent Decision-Making Open-Ended Working Group”, Submitted by Belarus et al.

60 General Assembly, Report of the Open-Ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025, [A/79/214](#), 2024, Annex C.

The majority of operational modalities were also delineated at this stage. The permanent mechanism would function as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, report to the First Committee and convene formal meetings at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The Office for Disarmament Affairs would serve as its Secretariat and create a dedicated e-portal to ensure transparency.<sup>61</sup> Annex C further specified that all decisions would be taken based on the principle of consensus and outlined transitional arrangements, including the mechanism's organizational session in early 2026 to elect leadership, establish dedicated thematic groups (DTGs) and adopt remaining modalities.<sup>62</sup> While certain elements (e.g., the precise configuration of DTGs and detailed stakeholder modalities) were left for finalization through the OEWG final report, States effectively discussed and consolidated key institutional and operational elements of the future mechanism throughout the third OEWG negotiation cycle.

## 2.4. Final consolidation into the Global Mechanism

Following adoption of the third APR, negotiations entered a final consolidation phase. With core elements agreed, States' discussions turned to resolving remaining modalities and translating agreed "elements" into an institutional framework capable of seamless transition from the OEWG. Outstanding issues were limited in number but politically significant. These included the name of the mechanism, the number and substantive focus of dedicated thematic groups, detailed modalities for stakeholder participation, and procedural arrangements for formal establishment.

Discussions on DTGs revealed differing views regarding how substantive work within the future mechanism should be organized. Proposals in this negotiation cycle were broadly clustered around four approaches:

- a. **Cross-cutting approaches:** DTGs organized around broader policy challenges, with norms, international law, confidence-building measures (CBMs), threats and capacity-building discussed in an integrated manner across each group<sup>63</sup>
- b. **Pillar-based approaches:** DTGs aligned with the Framework's five pillars, including proposals for a dedicated international law group or separate normative tracks<sup>64</sup>
- c. **Combined approaches:** proposals seeking to integrate cross-cutting practical groups with a dedicated legal or normative component<sup>65</sup>
- d. **Capacity-building focused approaches:** proposals emphasizing capacity-building either as a dedicated DTG or as a standing element across all thematic workstreams<sup>66</sup>

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61 [A/79/214](#), Annex C, paragraph 15.

62 [A/79/214](#), Annex C, paragraph 17.

63 For example, France (session 9, meeting 9); Canada (session 9, meeting 9); European Union (session 9, meeting 9); Germany (session 9, meeting 10); Ireland (session 9, meeting 10).

64 For example, Russia (session 9, meeting 9); Singapore (session 9, meeting 9); China (session 9, meeting 10).

65 For example, Egypt (session 9, meeting 9); Switzerland (session 9, meeting 10); Finland (session 10, meeting 10); South Africa (session 11, meeting 4).

66 For example, Brazil (session 9, meeting 9); Argentina (session 10, meeting 10); Uruguay (session 11, meeting 4).



A Representative of Malaysia (on screen) speaks during the eleventh substantive session (7–11 July) of the open-ended working group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021–2025, New York, 2025. Credit: UN Photo / Loey Felipe.

The configuration ultimately agreed in Annex I of the final report of OEWG 2021–2025 reflected elements from several of these approaches. It proposed a streamlined model of two integrated, policy-oriented and cross-cutting DTGs drawing on the five pillars of the Framework.<sup>67</sup>

- I. Address specific challenges in the sphere of ICT security in the context of international security (DTG1)
- II. Accelerate ICT security capacity-building (DTG2)

States also agreed on the final title of the mechanism: the “United Nations Global Mechanism on Developments in the Field of ICTs in the Context of International Security and Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in the Use of ICTs”. This choice reflected a carefully balanced synthesis. The term “Global Mechanism” underscored universality without explicitly privileging any previously advanced proposal.

Stakeholder participation – among the most sensitive issues across the mandate – was addressed by replicating the modalities for stakeholder accreditation from OEWG 2018–2021 with some adjustment:<sup>68</sup> new provisions were added to ensure greater transparency in States’ potential objections to the participation of individual stakeholders as well as Chair-facilitated consultations to address concerns related to such objections.<sup>69</sup> Importantly, the final report further clarified that all DTG meetings would take place in hybrid format and that, “in accordance with United Nations practice, hybrid meetings are considered informal”.<sup>70</sup> This settled at least one important operational aspect of the DTGs and reinforced their distinct character

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67 General Assembly, Final Report of the Open-Ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025, [A/80/257](#), 2025, Annex I, paragraph 7.

68 [A/80/257](#), Annex I, paragraph 15(d).

69 [A/80/257](#), Annex I, paragraph 15(l).

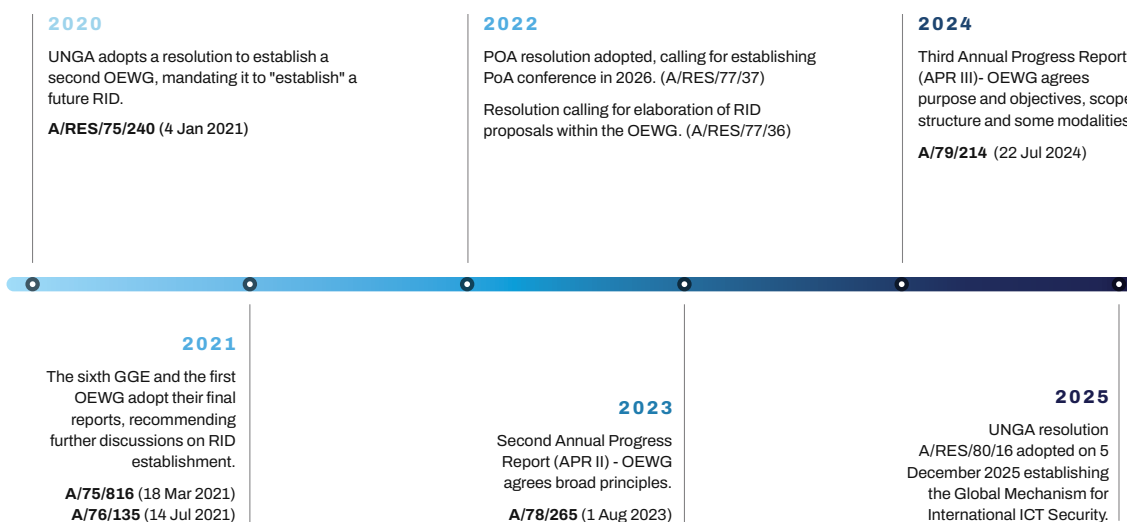
70 [A/80/257](#), Annex I, paragraph 10.

within the broader structure of the Global Mechanism. At the same time, the final report reaffirmed the intergovernmental and State-led nature of the Global Mechanism, while also signalling the openness of the DTGs to stakeholder participation and contributions.<sup>71</sup> Importantly, the final report maintained consensus as the governing basis for the Mechanism’s work and did not explicitly introduce alternative decision-making modalities.<sup>72</sup>

With the adoption of the Final Report in July 2025, the OEWG fulfilled its mandate on RID under resolution 75/240. The evolution through the four cycles illustrates a gradual transformation: from at times polarizing exchange of positions and diverging preferences around various proposals (Cycle 1); via gradual convergence around foundational design parameters and political objectives, such as flexibility, permanent nature and single-track mechanism (Cycle 2); to alignment around remaining structural and operational elements (Cycle 3); and on to resolution of the final, outstanding modalities (Cycle 4).

FIGURE 3.

### Timeline of institutionalization of United Nations discussion on international ICT security, second OEWG, 2020–2025<sup>73</sup>



71 [A/80/257](#), Annex I, paragraph 15.

72 [A/80/257](#), Annex I, paragraph 15(g).

73 Acronyms used in the figure: GGE - Group of Governmental Experts, ICT - Information and Communication Technology, OEWG - Open-ended Working Group, PoA - Programme of Action, RID - Regular Institutional Dialogue, UNGA - United Nations General Assembly.

## 3. Trends and major themes

Although discussions on regular institutional dialogue were not formally organized around fixed categories, five recurring macro themes can be identified in the OEWG discussions: purpose and objectives, guiding principles, scope and functions, structure, and modalities. These macro themes provide the analytical framework used in this section for understanding how States approached the task of institutional design within the OEWG 2021–2025. This allows the mapping of proposals advanced by Member States during RID discussions in greater detail and the identifying of specific subthemes that emerged under each theme over the course of States’ deliberations. Some of these subthemes cut across more than one macro theme; for example, inclusivity was discussed both as a guiding principle and as a question of modalities. The analysis below therefore does not treat the five macro themes as rigidly separate, but rather as organizing headings under which related debates can be clustered. The chronological evolution of these issues is addressed separately in Section 2.

### 3.1. Purpose and objectives

“Purpose and objectives” refer to the broader goals that States hope to achieve via a future permanent mechanism. These can include advancing the implementation or further development of the Framework, operationalization of additional CBMs, or coordination of capacity-building. Debates on purpose and objectives formed the conceptual anchor of OEWG discussions on RID.

From the inception, delegations broadly agreed on the purpose of the future mechanism, which should act as an intergovernmental forum for United Nations deliberations on ICTs in the context of international security. The primary objective of the mechanism would be to promote international peace, security and stability in the ICT environment by advancing the evolving and cumulative Framework, rather than “starting from scratch”.<sup>74</sup> Some delegations proposed that such advancement should take place in an “action-oriented manner”.<sup>75</sup> Proposals and statements submitted by various States and groups of States also suggested that, in addition to a deliberative role, the future mechanism could also serve decision-making,<sup>76</sup> coordination and facilitation purposes.

Across submissions and interventions, several recurring subthemes emerged under this macro theme. These included implementation and further development of the Framework; development and operationalization of additional CBMs; continued discussions on the application of international law;<sup>77</sup> negotiation of additional commitments, including legally binding obligations; and coordination of capacity-building efforts.

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74 For example, European Union (session 3, meeting 8); France (session 4, meeting 9); Slovakia (session 6, meeting 10).

75 For example, India (session 1, meeting 9); Egypt (session 1, meeting 9); Netherlands (session 2, meeting 9); Canada (session 2, meeting 9).

76 For example, “Concept Paper on a Permanent Decision-Making Open-Ended Working Group”, Submitted by Belarus et al.

77 [A/78/76](#), paragraph 29.

For some delegations, the principal purpose of the future mechanism was to support implementation of the agreed Framework.<sup>78</sup> Others placed greater emphasis on preserving space for continued normative and legal development, including further discussion on international law and, in some proposals, negotiation of additional<sup>79</sup> However, many delegations resisted treating these priorities as mutually exc.<sup>80</sup>

While these objectives appeared in multiple submissions in different configurations, States expressed a wide range of views regarding their relative prioritization and appropriate sequencing. For a number of delegations, the principal objective of a future mechanism was to prioritize the implementation of the previously agreed cumulative and evolving Framework.<sup>81</sup> In this view, regular dialogue would provide a structured and action-oriented platform to translate agreed norms, CBMs and capacity-building commitments into practical effect. This implementation-oriented perspective was closely associated with – but by no means limited to – proposals framed as a “Programme”<sup>82</sup>, representing a standing platform focused on implementation under United Nations auspices.

Other delegations identified the further development of the Framework as a central priority for any future mechanism.<sup>83</sup> While not dismissing the importance of implementation, they underscored the need to preserve dedicated space for continued study, clarification and, where appropriate, further elaboration of the Framework across all its pillars. In this context, specific proposals were made for the development of additional norms and the possibility of negotiating new legally binding obligations.<sup>84</sup>

A recurring subtheme across many interventions was the need to reconcile implementation and further development of the Framework within a single institutional architecture. Many delegations resisted framing implementation and development as mutually exclusive or as processes that could not proceed concurrently.<sup>85</sup> Instead, they advocated for a flexible mechanism capable of advancing implementation of existing commitments while retaining the ability to further develop the Framework, as appropriate, in response to the evolving ICT threat landscape and technological change.<sup>86</sup>

Taken together, discussions on purpose and objectives revealed a spectrum of institutional visions, ranging from implementation-focused models to development-oriented approaches,

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78 For example, Switzerland (session 1, meeting 9); France (session 4, meeting 9); Canada (session 4, meeting 9).

79 For example, Russia (session 1, meeting 9); Iran (session 1, meeting 9); Pakistan (session 1, meeting 9).

80 For example, India (session 1, meeting 9); United Kingdom (session 1, meeting 9); South Africa (session 2, meeting 9).

81 For example, Switzerland (session 1, meeting 9), France (session 4, meeting 9); Canada (session 4, meeting 9).

82 For example, “Working Paper for a Programme of Action (PoA)”, Submitted by a group of States.

83 For example, India (session 1, meeting 9); Pakistan (session 1, meeting 9); Thailand (session 2, meeting 9).

84 For example, Russia (session 1, meeting 9), India (session 1, meeting 9); Iran (session 1, meeting 9); Pakistan (session 1, meeting 9).

85 For example, India (session 1, meeting 9); United Kingdom (session 1, meeting 9); South Africa (session 2, meeting 9).

86 For example, France (session 1, meeting 9); Australia (session 1, meeting 9); Colombia (session 6, meeting 10); Latvia (session 6, meeting 10).

as well as hybrid arrangements seeking to accommodate both. These differing orientations, in turn, shaped debates on institutional design across guiding principles, scope and functions, structure, and modalities.

## 3.2. Guiding principles

In parallel with discussions on purpose and objectives, States proposed various guiding principles intended to inform the character and functioning of a future mechanism. Across submissions and statements, several foundational principles were repeatedly invoked as essential to the legitimacy and effectiveness of regular institutional dialogue.

Among these, inclusivity featured as a prominent subtheme. Delegations consistently emphasized that the mechanism should be open to all United Nations Member States.<sup>87</sup> This reflected the universal relevance of international ICT security and States' consensus that such matters should be addressed in an inclusive format beyond the GGE expert format. While inclusivity itself was widely supported, discussions revealed differing views on how it should be translated into practice, particularly with respect to stakeholder participation and the ability of all delegations to engage meaningfully in the proceedings.

Flexibility was another commonly referenced subtheme, particularly by delegations seeking to strike a balance between implementation and further development of the Framework. Given the dynamic nature of technological change and the evolving ICT threat landscape, many States underscored the importance of designing a mechanism capable of adapting over time.<sup>88</sup> Flexibility was therefore understood as enabling the process to evolve without requiring repeated structural renegotiation of time-bound mandates, which had proven challenging in the past.

Closely related was the subtheme of complementarity, frequently expressed alongside the notion of non-duplication. Delegations emphasized that a future mechanism should operate as a "single-track process",<sup>89</sup> should build upon previous GGE and OEWG outcomes, and should coordinate with other relevant processes rather than duplicate, in part or in whole, existing efforts within the United Nations system.<sup>90</sup> This principle reflected sensitivity to the risk of fragmentation within the United Nations system, the prior experience of parallel GGE and OEWG processes, and the desire to promote coherence.

Over the course of OEWG discussions, the subtheme of permanence emerged with increasing frequency. While initially embedded in specific proposals,<sup>91</sup> permanence eventually came to be framed more broadly as essential to ensuring continuity, predictability and institutional memory within the United Nations' engagement on international ICT security.

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87 For example, [A/78/76](#), paragraph 14.

88 For example, [A/78/76](#), paragraph 15.

89 For example, [A/79/214](#), paragraph 56(b).

90 For example, "Concept Paper on a Permanent Decision-Making Open-Ended Working Group", Submitted by Belarus et al., 2; "Working Paper for a Programme of Action (PoA)", Submitted by a group of States, 4.

91 For example, "Working Paper for a Programme of Action (PoA)", Submitted by a group of States; "Concept Paper on a Permanent Decision-Making Open-Ended Working Group", Submitted by Belarus et al.

A related and frequently cited principle was sustainability, often invoked to underscore that financial provisions would need to be made for the continuity and long-term viability of any permanent mechanism. Although broadly supported, sustainability remained linked to specific questions about how institutional ambition would align with available resources and sustained political commitment.

Transparency was similarly referenced as a subtheme, particularly in relation to reporting, information-sharing and the openness of discussions. Compared with the closed-door format of the GGE processes, the first OEWG established a comparatively higher degree of procedural transparency, which was continued from the outset by its successor, the OEWG 2021–2025. Written submissions and proposals were made publicly available, substantive sessions were webcast, and draft reports were circulated to delegations and uploaded to the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs. In discussions on RID, delegations emphasized that transparency should remain a feature of any future mechanism.<sup>92</sup>

Beyond these broadly shared principles, additional considerations were raised across various proposals. Some delegations underscored the importance of respect for sovereignty, preserving the intergovernmental nature of the process, non-interference in the internal affairs of States,<sup>93</sup> human rights,<sup>94</sup> gender<sup>95</sup> and capacity-building.<sup>96</sup>

While many of these guiding principles were not themselves contested, discussions revealed differing perspectives on how they should be operationalized and balanced in practice through specific functions, structure and modalities, including modalities for decision-making and stakeholder participation. The various principles guided the concrete institutional design proposals that were advanced and debated.

### 3.3. Scope and functions

The term “functions” is used here to refer to specific programmatic activities to be undertaken within the future mechanism to support the attainment of agreed objectives. For example, to advance implementation, specific functions could include voluntary reporting; mapping challenges faced by States when implementing the Framework identifying good practices and solutions to support national implementation efforts; conducting the Framework gap analysis; or exchanging lessons learned. If discussions on purpose addressed the overarching goals of a future mechanism (see Section 3.1), debates on scope and function concerned the substantive focus of the process and the specific activities through which agreed objectives would be pursued. In this context, “scope” refers to the thematic coverage of the mechanism (e.g., CBMs), while the term “functions” denotes the concrete programmatic activities that the future mechanism would undertake under this agreed scope (e.g.,

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92 For example, India (session 1, meeting 9), European Union (session 1, meeting 9), Iran (session 1, meeting 9), South Africa (session 4, meeting 9), Bangladesh (session 6, meeting 10); Pakistan (session 6, meeting 10).

93 For example, “Concept Paper on a Permanent Decision-Making Open-Ended Working Group”, Submitted by Belarus et al., 2.

94 For example, Argentina (session 6, meeting 9); Thailand (session 9, meeting 10).

95 For example, Brazil (session 8, meeting 4); Chile (session 10, meeting 9).

96 [A/78/76](#), paragraph 31.

implementation of agreed CBMs). In practice, discussions on both evolved in parallel and were closely interlinked.

Across submissions and statements, there was broad agreement that the mechanism's scope should encompass the Framework in a holistic manner. Proposals frequently referenced advancing discussions across Framework pillars, including identifying ICT-related threats;<sup>97</sup> supporting implementation of norms, international law and CBMs;<sup>98</sup> strengthening capacity-building efforts;<sup>99</sup> and further developing specific elements of the Framework. In addition to defining thematic scope, States proposed a range of concrete functions. While these proposals attracted differing levels of support and were not equally reflected in subsequent negotiated outcomes, they collectively illustrate the breadth of activities envisioned by different States for a future mechanism. These proposals included:

- ▶ **Mapping specific needs and challenges faced by States<sup>100</sup> when implementing the Framework<sup>101</sup>**
- ▶ **Identifying good practices, lessons learned and solutions to support national implementation efforts<sup>102</sup>**
- ▶ **Conducting voluntary reporting<sup>103</sup> and Framework gap analysis across norms and international law<sup>104</sup>**
- ▶ **Elaborating threat-mitigation and incident-response measures<sup>105</sup>**
- ▶ **Establishing a multilateral attribution cooperation mechanism under the framework of the United Nations<sup>106</sup>**
- ▶ **Strengthening communications channels and elaborating procedures for de-escalation in the event of ICT incidents<sup>107</sup>**
- ▶ **Mobilizing and pairing available resources with requests for capacity-building support<sup>108</sup>**

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97 For example, European Union (session 9, meeting 9); Japan (session 9, meeting 9)

98 For example, Egypt on behalf of the Arab Group (session 6, meeting 10); European Union (session 9, meeting 9); Australia (session 10, meeting 10).

99 For example, European Union (session 9, meeting 9); Argentina (session 10, meeting 10); Australia (session 10, meeting 10).

100 For example, "Proposal on the Structure of the Future Mechanism for Regular Institutional Dialogue on Cyber Issues", Cross-regional working paper submitted by Albania et al., [https://docs-library.unoda.org/Open-Ended\\_Working\\_Group\\_on\\_Information\\_and\\_Communication\\_Technologies\\_-\\_ \(2021\)/OEWG\\_cross-regional\\_working\\_paper\\_-\\_Future\\_UN\\_cyber\\_mechanism\\_for\\_2025\\_onward-vf\\_0.pdf](https://docs-library.unoda.org/Open-Ended_Working_Group_on_Information_and_Communication_Technologies_-_ (2021)/OEWG_cross-regional_working_paper_-_Future_UN_cyber_mechanism_for_2025_onward-vf_0.pdf), 2.

101 "Proposal on the Structure of the Future Mechanism", Cross-regional working paper, 2.

102 "Proposal on the Structure of the Future Mechanism", Cross-regional working paper, 2.

103 Chairperson OEWG 2021–2025, "Draft Elements", paragraph 16.

104 [A/78/76](#), paragraph 28.

105 For example, Mexico (session 6, meeting 10); Singapore (session 9, meeting 9); Thailand (session 9, meeting 10); United Kingdom (session 9, meeting 10); Cameroon (session 10, meeting 9); Japan (session 10, meeting 9).

106 Statement submitted by China, 17 February 2025, [https://docs-library.unoda.org/Open-Ended\\_Working\\_Group\\_on\\_Information\\_and\\_Communication\\_Technologies\\_-\\_ \(2021\)/REMARK~1.PDF](https://docs-library.unoda.org/Open-Ended_Working_Group_on_Information_and_Communication_Technologies_-_ (2021)/REMARK~1.PDF), 18.

107 For example, Netherlands (session 1, meeting 9); Netherlands (session 8, meeting 4).

108 "Proposal on the Structure of the Future Mechanism", Cross-regional working paper, 2.

- ▶ **Negotiating additional commitments**, including legally binding obligations, to increase international cooperation on ICT security<sup>109</sup>

Many States also called for the mechanism to report periodically to the General Assembly, consistent with the established practice of past OEWGs and GGEs.<sup>110</sup> This would imply a “reporting” function, although the proposals differed on the precise length and scope of this reporting cycle.

While most proposals referenced many of these functions, early differences were evident regarding prioritization, sequencing and the extent of ambition. Some delegations emphasized practical support for national implementation and capacity-building coordination.<sup>111</sup> Others underscored the importance of prioritizing space for normative or legal development.<sup>112</sup> These differing emphases also informed how delegations envisaged the prioritization of functions and sequencing of specific programmatic activities to fulfil those functions. For example, some supported an initial focus on functions related to reviewing implementation of existing norms and clarifying how international law applies (including identifying potential gaps) before considering whether additional norms or legally binding obligations would be needed.<sup>113</sup> Others placed greater emphasis on functions related to advancing normative and legal elaboration either in parallel<sup>114</sup> or as a primary function of the mechanism.<sup>115</sup>

Taken together, discussions on scope and function showed broad convergence around a comprehensive thematic scope covering all elements of the Framework, including threats, norms, international law, CBMs and capacity-building.<sup>116</sup> At the same time, divergences persisted regarding the specific functions the mechanism should perform within this scope, particularly the balance between implementation-oriented activities (e.g., capacity-building coordination, voluntary reporting and exchange of good practices) and more normative functions (e.g., norm development and negotiation of additional commitments). The agreed scope and functions of the Global Mechanism ultimately reflected a compromise by incorporating both implementation and further development as potential functions, while framing more sensitive or prescriptive programmatic activities in general terms or creating a space for their future inclusion through a dedicated review conference.<sup>117</sup>

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109 “Concept Paper on a Permanent Decision-Making Open-Ended Working Group”, Submitted by Belarus et al., 1; “Proposal on the Structure of the Future Mechanism”, Cross-regional working paper, 2.

110 For example, Submission by Brazil, [https://docs-library.unoda.org/Open-Ended\\_Working\\_Group\\_on\\_Information\\_and\\_Communication\\_Technologies\\_-\\_2021/Brazil\\_EN\\_-\\_website.pdf](https://docs-library.unoda.org/Open-Ended_Working_Group_on_Information_and_Communication_Technologies_-_2021/Brazil_EN_-_website.pdf), paragraph 11; [A/78/76](#), Submission by Egypt, 39; Submission by Slovenia, 76.

111 For example, France (session 9, meeting 9); European Union (session 9, meeting 9).

112 For example, [A/78/76](#), paragraph 28.

113 For example, Egypt on behalf of the Arab Group (session 6, meeting 9); Japan (session 6, meeting 10).

114 For example, European Union (session 6, meeting 9); France (session 6, meeting 9).

115 For example, Iran (session 9, meeting 9).

116 [A/78/76](#), paragraph 9; [A/79/214](#), Annex C, paragraph 9; [A/80/257](#), Annex I, paragraph 6.

117 [A/79/214](#), Annex C, paragraphs 8–11; [A/80/257](#).

## 3.4. Structure

Three principal subthemes arose in discussions on the structure of the future mechanism.

First, various proposals supported the holding of plenary sessions open to all Member States within the new RID.<sup>118</sup> This would both reflect continuity with the OEWG practice and preserve the intergovernmental character of the mechanism as a forum for exchange of views among Member States and the adoption of formal outcomes. Specific proposals also suggested retaining other meeting formats that had been developed in the two OEWG processes, including dedicated multi-stakeholder dialogues and high-level round tables on specific thematic issues, such as capacity-building.<sup>119</sup>

A second, and related, structural subtheme concerned the overall format and temporal nature of the future mechanism. While some delegations supported a permanent standing arrangement under United Nations auspices,<sup>120</sup> others favoured retaining an OEWG-type model, in some cases with longer or rolling mandates.<sup>121</sup> These preferences reflected different views on how best to preserve inclusivity, flexibility and space for continued intergovernmental discussion and negotiation. In the agreed texts, the preference for a permanent mechanism ultimately prevailed, although elements associated with flexibility and continued review were also retained.

Third, numerous submissions and statements acknowledged the potential value of subsidiary bodies to facilitate more focused and technical exchanges. Proposals referenced intersessional working groups, thematic committees or dedicated subsidiary tracks tasked with addressing specific subject areas. These included working groups aligned with the pillars of the Framework to assess its implementation, examine developments in the ICT threat landscape, identify priority and provide strategic political guidance.<sup>122</sup> However, views differed on their frequency of meeting, duration,<sup>123</sup> scope,<sup>124</sup> and relationship to plenary meetings and programmatic work.<sup>125</sup>

In terms of the institutional layers of the future mechanism, certain proposals envisaged a multi-tiered structure composed of review conferences, plenaries and intersessional thematic bodies.<sup>126</sup> Others favoured a more streamlined architecture limited to one or two

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118 For example, “Concept Paper on a Permanent Decision-Making Open-Ended Working Group”, Submitted by Belarus et al., 2; “Proposal on the Structure of the Future Mechanism”, Cross-regional working paper, 2; Chairperson OEWG 2021–2025, “Draft Elements”, paragraph 9.

119 For example, “Proposal on the Structure of the Future Mechanism”, Cross-regional working paper, 2; Chairperson OEWG 2021–2025, “Draft Elements”, paragraph 21.

120 For example, European Union (session 1, meeting 9); Indonesia (session 1, meeting 9); Colombia (session 1, meeting 9).

121 For example, Russia (session 1, meeting 9); Iran (session 2, meeting 9).

122 For example, Japan (session 2, meeting 9), South Korea (session 6, meeting 10), European Union (session 7, meeting 10); United States (session 7, meeting 10).

123 For example, Egypt (session 6, meeting 10); Ghana (session 10, meeting 10).

124 For example, Egypt on behalf of the Arab Group (session 6, meeting 10); France (session 7, meeting 10). See also [A/78/76](#), Annex, Submission by Australia, 16.

125 For example, Egypt (session 6, meeting 9); France (session 7, meeting 10).

126 For example, [A/78/76](#), Annex, Submission by Australia, 17; Submission by Egypt, 38; Submission by Belgium, 20.

layers, typically centred on plenaries with the possible establishment of subsidiary working groups.<sup>127</sup> For example, some proposals outlined a three-tier structure comprising review conferences held every four to six years, biannual plenaries and working groups convened.<sup>128</sup> One proposal suggested adopting biennial progress reports without creating an review layer.<sup>129</sup>

Some submissions and statements also addressed the subtheme of the potential leadership structure of the new mechanism. A group of States proposed a leadership bureau composed of a chair and vice-chairs, specified the duration of appointment of these officeholders, and made references to specific arrangements for ensuring regional balance.<sup>130</sup> While some submissions did not elaborate in detail on leadership design, others referenced a regionally representative bureau.<sup>131</sup>

Structural preferences were closely linked to expectations regarding the mechanism's functions. Proposals that envisaged broader thematic work tended to favour a more layered architecture, including plenaries, subsidiary bodies and periodic review meetings. Other proposals placed greater emphasis on plenary-based political negotiations and streamlined reporting, preferring leaner configurations with fewer subsidiary bodies and less institutional layering.

In the agreed texts, several structural preferences were retained, but often in a streamlined form. The final architecture of the Global Mechanism preserved plenary meetings open to all Member States,<sup>132</sup> confirmed the Office for Disarmament Affairs as Secretariat,<sup>133</sup> established subsidiary bodies<sup>134</sup> periodic review cycle.<sup>135</sup> At the same time, the agreed design did not reproduce the most elaborate multilayered proposals in full: instead, it settled on only two initial DTGs,<sup>136</sup> annual plenary sessions,<sup>137</sup> and a five-year cycle combining two biennial phases followed by a one-year period, including a Review Conference.<sup>138</sup> Leadership arrangements were also retained in simplified form through cycle-based chairs implicitly through the possibility of selecting geographically representative co-facilitators for the DTGs.<sup>139</sup> In contrast, competing institutional formats, including alternative or parallel models outside the agreed permanent mechanism, were not included in the final design.

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127 For example, [A/78/76](#), Annex, Submission by Canada, 25; Submission by Norway, 70.

128 For example, [A/78/76](#), Annex, Submission by Egypt, p38; Submission by Belgium, 21–22.

129 [A/78/76](#), Annex, Submission by Czechia, 33.

130 For example, Bangladesh (session 7, meeting 10), Iran (session 7, meeting 10); Kenya (session 11, meeting 4).

131 For example, “Concept Paper on a Permanent Decision-Making Open-Ended Working Group”, Submitted by Belarus et al., 3; Chairperson OEWG 2021–2025, “Draft Elements”, paragraph 18(c). See also, for example, El Salvador (session 7, meeting 10).

132 [A/79/214](#), 22 July 2024, Annex C, paragraph 12(a).

133 [A/79/214](#), Annex C, paragraph 15(c).

134 [A/79/214](#), Annex C, paragraph 12.

135 Ibid.

136 [A/79/214](#), Annex C, paragraph 7.

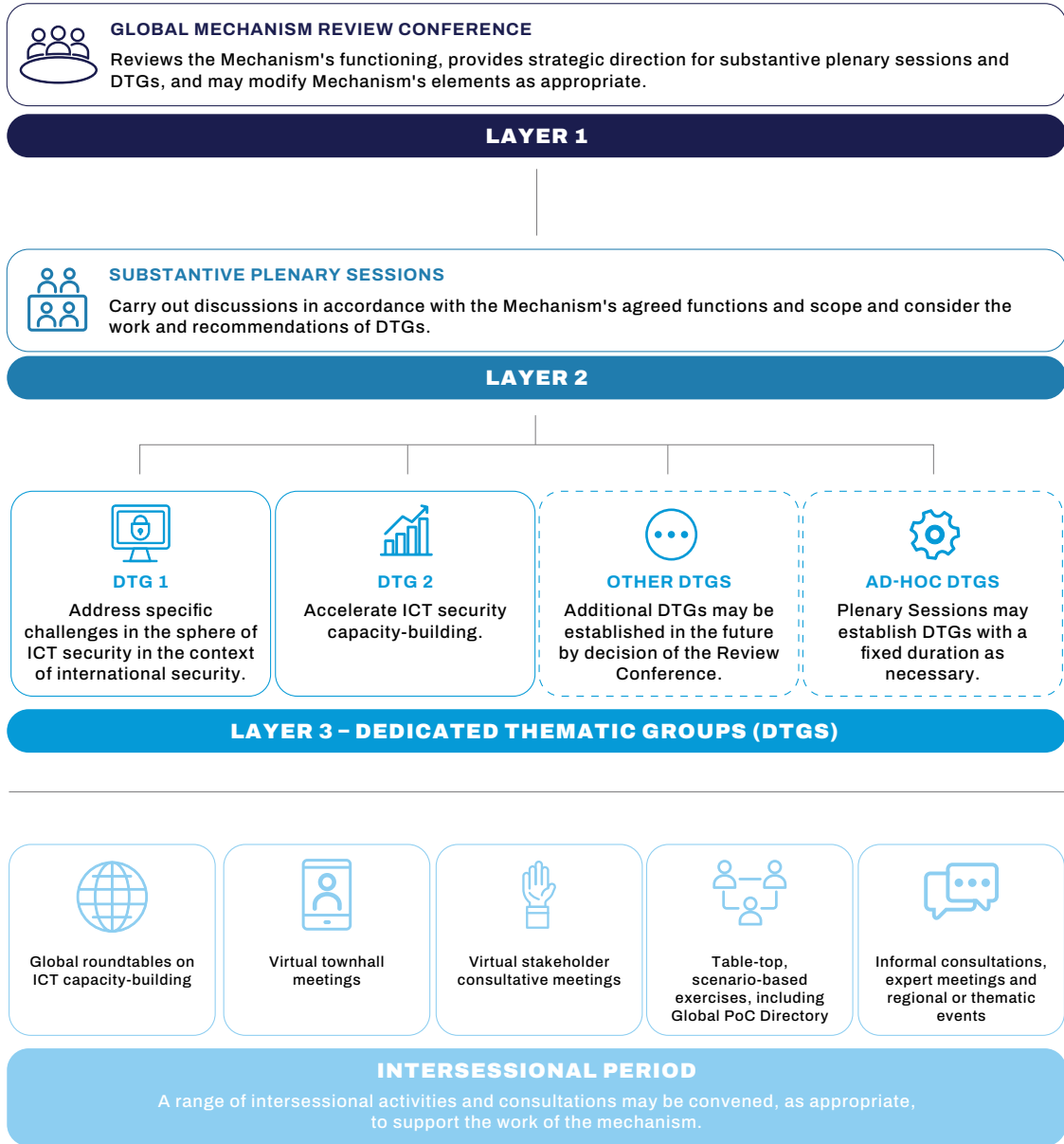
137 [A/79/214](#), Annex C, paragraph 12(a).

138 [A/79/214](#), Annex C, paragraph 12.

139 [A/79/214](#), Annex C, paragraph 13.

FIGURE 4.

## Agreed structure of the Global Mechanism on ICT Security



## 3.5. Modalities

If structure concerned the institutional architecture, modalities addressed the procedural rules governing how RID would operate in practice.<sup>140</sup> The future mechanism would, unless otherwise specified, be guided by the United Nations General Assembly's Rules of Procedure.

Within this macro theme, the main procedural subthemes concerned, decision-making and stakeholder participation to facilitate an “inclusive, transparent, consensus-driven, and results-based” process.<sup>141</sup> In practice, this meant that delegations discussed how principles such as inclusivity, transparency and consensus should be translated into concrete modalities, including decision-making and meeting arrangements (e.g., location and format). While inclusivity as a guiding principle was not broadly questioned by States, the precise modality for stakeholder engagement featured prominently in OEWG debates. Delegations supported engagement with civil society, the private sector and academia.<sup>142</sup> At the same time, States generally agreed that the permanent mechanism should preserve the State-led nature of the discussion and that stakeholder engagement should take place on the basis of the principle of “a voice, not a vote”.<sup>143</sup>

Regarding stakeholder participation, states debated whether stakeholder participation modalities should apply uniformly across all components of the future mechanism. Some States preferred to opt for the existing accreditation procedures of the Economic and Social Council and for maintaining consistent accreditation modalities throughout the future mechanism.<sup>144</sup> Others supported a tailored accreditation procedure specific to the mechanism and differentiated approach under which DTGs,<sup>145</sup> particularly if operating in a more informal or expert-oriented manner, could allow broader and more flexible stakeholder engagement than substantive sessions of the plenary or review conference.<sup>146</sup> These discussions were linked to broader debates concerning the status of DTGs as formal or informal bodies, their working methods, and their intended role in supporting operational and technical exchanges.

In parallel, discussions also addressed the ability of States to participate meaningfully, including proposals for voluntary sponsorship arrangements to facilitate participation of capital-based experts from developing countries and smaller delegations.<sup>147</sup> These suggestions were linked to concerns about equitable geographic participation.<sup>148</sup>

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140 [A/80/257](#), paragraph 63.

141 [A/AC.290/2021/CRP.2](#), paragraph 74.

142 [A/79/214](#), Annex C, paragraph 6.

143 For example, France (session 7, meeting 9); United States (session 7, meeting 9); Brazil (session 8, meeting 4); Latvia (session 8, meeting 5); Latvia (session 8, meeting 5); Iran (session 10, meeting 9); China (session 10, meeting 10).

144 For example, Russia (session 9, meeting 9); Iran (session 9, meeting 9); Ghana (session 10, meeting 10).

145 For example, Brazil (session 9, meeting 9).

146 For example, Canada and Chile co-coordinated, on behalf of a cross-regional group of States, the submission of a working paper on practical modalities to enable meaningful stakeholder participation in the future UN mechanism on cybersecurity. See [Practical Modalities for Stakeholders' Participation and Accreditation Future UN Mechanism on Cybersecurity](#), 20 May 2025.

147 [A/80/257](#), Annex I, paragraph 15(j).

148 For example, Brazil (session 8, meeting 4); Sierra Leone (session 9, meeting 10).

Consensus-based decision-making received broad support. Delegations emphasized the importance of the “principle of consensus” both in establishing the future mechanism and in guiding its subsequent decision-making.<sup>149</sup> Some understood this principle to apply to both procedural and substantive matters.<sup>150</sup> However, the precise scope of consensus, and whether narrowly defined exceptions should apply, remained under discussion. Discussions revealed differing interpretations of how consensus should function in practice. Alongside the need to preserve efficiency and effectiveness, concerns were expressed regarding the potential for a misuse of consensus to lead to gridlock or de facto veto dynamics.<sup>151</sup> Clarifications were also offered that the “principle of consensus” should not be equated with strict unanimity or individual veto power. In a more limited context, particularly concerning decisions on stakeholder participation, proposals suggested that majority voting could serve as a fallback where objections were not broadly shared.<sup>152</sup>

Discussions on modalities also addressed the locations of meetings. While formal plenary meetings would ordinarily be convened at United Nations Headquarters in New York,<sup>153</sup> some proposals advocated flexibility for informal and/or intersessional meetings.<sup>154</sup> This could include convening working groups at other United Nations regional offices (e.g. Bangkok, Geneva or Nairobi), holding meetings in additional locations,<sup>155</sup> or allowing host countries to organize intersessional sessions.<sup>156</sup> These proposals were frequently linked to considerations of inclusivity, cost-efficiency and broader participation (including capital-based experts and access to relevant institutional ecosystems outside New York). Hybrid participation modalities were also supported.<sup>157</sup> Concerns were raised about avoiding parallel meetings to enable meaningful participation by smaller delegations.<sup>158</sup> The extent of location flexibility for thematic or intersessional work was not addressed in the official outcomes and may resurface during future meetings of the Global Mechanism.

Beyond stakeholder participation, decision-making and location, discussions on modalities also addressed the future mechanism’s reporting cycles, adoption of its programmes of work, possible timing of meetings and the procedural steps needed for the mechanism’s formal establishment. Various proposals envisaged establishment through a General Assembly

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149 For example, Nicaragua (session 4, meeting 10); Philippines (session 5, meeting 5); Netherlands (session 5, meeting 5); Brazil on behalf of the IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) Dialogue Forum (session 6, meeting 10); Bangladesh (session 6, meeting 10); Malaysia (session 6, meeting 10); South Africa (session 6, meeting 10); China (session 7, meeting 10); Israel (session 8, meeting 5); United Kingdom (session 8, meeting 7); Israel (session 9, meeting 10).

150 For example, Cuba (session 6, meeting 9); Israel (session 6, meeting 10).

151 For example, Submission by Brazil, paragraphs 5, 19.

152 For example, Portugal (session 10, meeting 10).

153 For example, Sri Lanka (session 7, meeting 10); El Salvador (session 7, meeting 10).

154 For example, Bangladesh (session 7, meeting 10); Czechia (session 7, meeting 10); Germany (session 8, meeting 7); France (Session 9, meeting 9); Viet Nam (session 10, meeting 10).

155 For example, Iran (session 7, meeting 10); France (Session 9, meeting 9); Switzerland (session 9, meeting 10).

156 For example, Czechia (session 7, meeting 10); Viet Nam (session 10, meeting 10).

157 For example, Argentina (session 8, meeting 7); Singapore (session 9, meeting 9); Indonesia (session 9, meeting 10); Argentina (session 9, meeting 10); China (session 10, meeting 10).

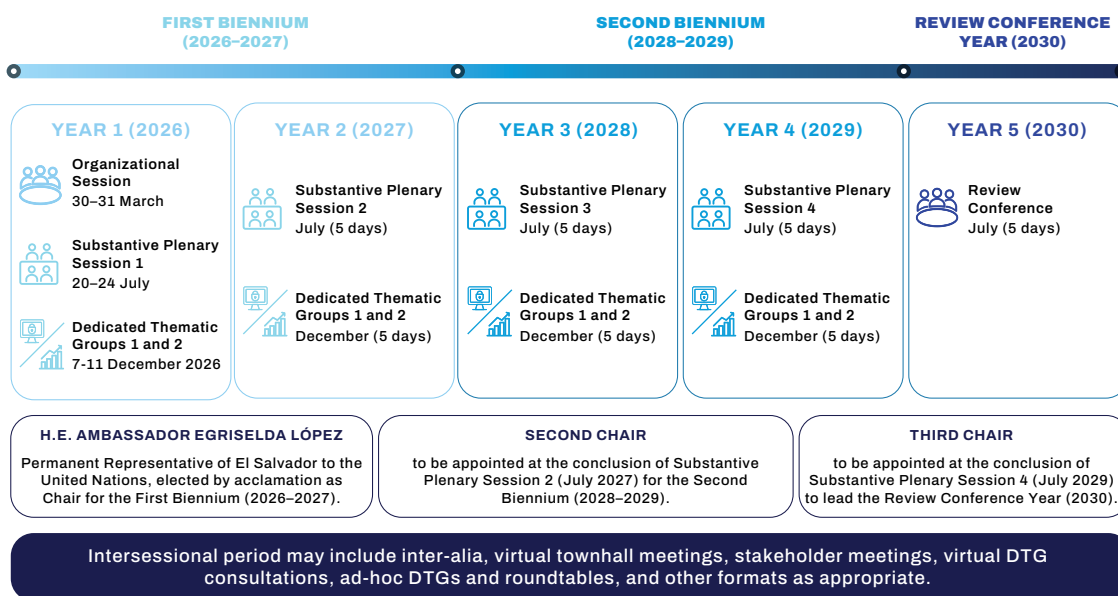
158 For example, Chile (session 9, meeting 10).

resolution, a decision or a dedicated conference.<sup>159</sup> Across these discussions, debate centred on how agreed principles should be translated into detailed operational arrangements.

The final design of the Global Mechanism established a five-year operational cycle structured around three leadership periods, annual substantive plenary sessions, DTG meetings and a periodic review conference, while also leaving space for intersessional consultations and additional working methods and practices to emerge over time (see Figure 5).

FIGURE 5.

### The five-year cycle of the Global Mechanism<sup>160</sup>



159 Resolution 77/36; resolution 77/37.

160 The specific months shown for 2027–2030 are indicative and will be set by the Global Mechanism.

## 4. Insights beyond the official outcomes

This section distils key lessons from the negotiations by examining the challenges that complicated convergence, the practices that enabled consensus and the implications of these dynamics for the operation of the Global Mechanism.

### 4.1. Challenges

A first challenge stemmed from competing visions regarding how RID should be organized. Proposals for a PoA, a renewed or permanent OEWG-type process, or various hybrid arrangements integrating both proposals reflected deeper differences among States over the future trajectory of the Framework, particularly the balance between implementation and further normative or legal development. These differences were not merely procedural, but were substantive in nature, which made convergence on future RID more complex and, at times, slowed progress.

A second challenge concerned stakeholder participation, which emerged early as a procedural fault line and remained sensitive throughout the negotiations. Diverging views on how and to what extent non-governmental actors should be involved reflected broader questions about the intergovernmental character of the process, inclusivity and trust. The ongoing sensitivity and contentious nature of the stakeholder participation question throughout the OEWG process illustrated how procedural questions could become focal points for broader political differences.

A third challenge related to the tension between the ambitions of individual States and the requirement for consensus of the broader United Nations membership. Proposals that sought to introduce more ambitious programmatic activities (e.g., operationalizing a mechanism for attribution, detailed review of national implementation of the Framework, or specific mandates to facilitate development of additional norms or legally binding obligations) did not attract consensus by the end of the OEWG and were either deferred or excluded from agreed texts. This reflected a broader dynamic in United Nations negotiations whereby the requirement for consensus constrained the level of specificity and ambition that could be reflected in the Global Mechanism's institutional design.

A fourth development shaping the negotiations was the concurrent adoption of two General Assembly resolutions during the OEWG 2021–2025 negotiation cycle, which created a real possibility of dual-track processes following the conclusion of the OEWG. This prospect generated sustained pressure from many delegations to consolidate discussions within a single inclusive mechanism. In turn, the preference for a single-track process influenced both the direction and the pace of convergence, reinforcing efforts to avoid fragmentation and to anchor future RID within a single institutional framework.

## 4.2. Good practices and lessons learned

Despite these challenges, several good practices enabled States to gradually converge on a common institutional design.

First, a structured and step-by-step approach to negotiations proved useful. The Chair's use of guiding questions and phased discussions allowed States to move from initial positional exchanges towards more focused engagement on specific design elements. While early stages of the process provided space for delegations to articulate and defend their individual preferences, subsequent phases progressively focused discussions on core objectives, guiding principles, structure and modalities, and the thematic focuses of the DTGs. This step-by-step approach helped manage complexity and reduced the risk of early deadlock by avoiding the need to resolve all issues simultaneously. In practice, the Chair structured early outcomes around areas of convergence (i.e., guiding principles), while more difficult issues were addressed at a later stage of the negotiations (i.e., the focus of substantive work in the DTGs), which allowed agreement to build incrementally.

Second, the use of bridging formulations played an important role in enabling agreement, particularly in overcoming entrenched positions linked to specific institutional proposals. Over time, labels such as "Programme of Action" or "OEWG-type process" became associated with distinct political orientations. The gradual shift towards more neutral formulations, including references to a "permanent mechanism", helped depoliticize the debate. At the same time, composite language used in Annex C of the third APR – such as "open-ended", "action-oriented" and "permanent" – alongside references to flexibility and evolution of the permanent mechanism allowed different priorities to be reflected within a single framework. These formulations did not resolve underlying differences, but they did provide sufficient common ground for consensus by accommodating multiple interpretations and expectations.

Third, convergence was facilitated by a consolidation of elements drawn from different proposals. Through successive iterations, the Chair introduced composite formulations that helped bridge divisions. Rather than selecting a single model, States were able to combine elements from across existing proposals. The resulting Global Mechanism reflects some features associated with the PoA (e.g., an emphasis on implementation and periodic review) alongside elements associated with the OEWG format (e.g., inclusivity, plenary sessions and a State-led process). This integrative approach allowed States to move beyond binary choices and to focus on practical arrangements that could command broader support.

Fourth, the design of the Global Mechanism itself incorporated flexibility as a means of enabling consensus. While specific proposals for dedicated thematic groups that focused exclusively on implementation or negotiating new norms did not command consensus, the agreed structure allows for consideration of both objectives in the future. At the same time, the absence of specific DTGs on these issues does not preclude discussions on these issues within the Global Mechanism. This flexibility enabled States to support the overall design while preserving the possibility of advancing their priorities at a later stage.

Finally, the introduction of cross-cutting, policy-oriented thematic groups represents an innovation that may facilitate evolution of discussions beyond structured exchanges in plenary settings. By structuring work around integrated themes, such as capacity-building and ICT challenges, the Global Mechanism creates space for more focused, and potentially more technical, engagement across all pillars of the Framework.

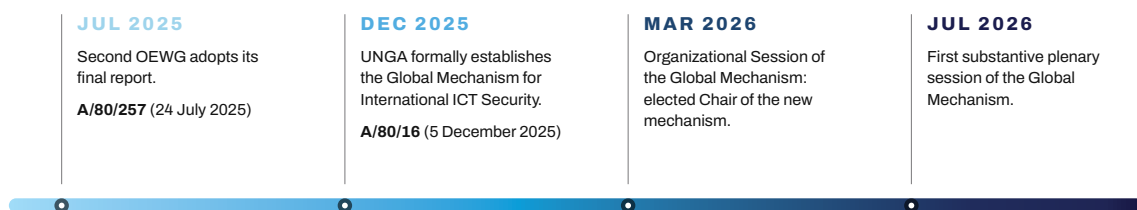
### 4.3. Implications for the Global Mechanism

The outcome of the OEWG 2021–2025 have four main implications for the Global Mechanism on ICT Security: an “architecture-first” outcome; built-in flexibility; enhanced inclusiveness; and an integrated and cross-cutting nature of DTGs.

First, the OEWG negotiations resulted in an “architecture-first” outcome. States reached agreement on the structure, guiding principles and procedural modalities of the Global Mechanism, while leaving the precise nature and prioritization of substantive work within the DTGs open to further clarification. To some extent, negotiations on RID focused more on designing an inclusive and durable process than on defining in detail the concrete outcomes that the mechanism should ultimately deliver for international peace and security in cyberspace. This reflected both the complexity of reconciling different preferences and the need for strategic ambiguity. Such ambiguity enabled consensus around the mechanism’s establishment despite continued differences regarding substantive priorities, including implementation, further normative development and operational cooperation. While this flexibility facilitated agreement on the Global Mechanism’s design, it also means that the mechanism’s long-term relevance and added value may depend less on its formal architecture. Rather, they will depend on how States choose to use it in practice and whether they are able to translate process continuity into substantive progress on ICT security and cyberspace stability over time.

FIGURE 6.

#### Timeline of institutionalization of United Nations discussion on international ICT security, transition of the global mechanism, 2025–2026<sup>161</sup>



161 Acronyms used in the figure: GGE - Group of Governmental Experts, OEWG - Open-ended Working Group, POA - Programme of Action, RID - Regular Institutional Dialogue, UNGA - United Nations General Assembly.

Second, and relatedly, flexibility is embedded as a core feature of the Global Mechanism. The inclusion of periodic review cycles and the possibility to establish or adapt thematic groups over time will allow the mechanism to evolve in response to the changing ICT threat landscape and the needs and priorities of Member States. At the same time, this flexibility may also lead to uneven progression of substantive work across the pillars of the Framework depending on levels of political will and Member States' convergence.

Third, the consolidation of discussions within a single-track, inclusive Global Mechanism responds directly to earlier concerns about fragmentation of United Nations processes on international aspects of ICT security. By establishing a single standing intergovernmental platform under the auspices of the General Assembly, States have created a durable architecture for ongoing dialogue on ICTs in the context of international security. While this may increase coherence within the United Nations system and reduce the risk of contentious General Assembly votes over mandate renewals, it may also generate greater expectations on the Global Mechanism to deliver meaningful outcomes.

Finally, the integrated and balanced nature of the agreed design reflects a key milestone in multilateral cyber diplomacy. The Global Mechanism combines permanence with adaptability, inclusivity with State leadership, and broad thematic scope with selective prioritization of activities for each of its five-year working cycles. In this sense, it is not designed to eliminate differences among States, but to provide a structured and sustainable framework within which those differences can be managed and, where possible, reconciled over time.

At the same time, several operational and procedural elements of the Global Mechanism remained only partially clarified at the conclusion of the OEWG mandate. These were left for further elaboration during the organizational session of the Global Mechanism in March 2026 and the subsequent operationalization phase. These include the frequency and sequencing of reporting by the DTGs to the plenary sessions and by the plenary to the General Assembly, the location of meetings, leadership and facilitation arrangements for the two initial DTGs as well as their working methods, expected outputs, and the role and use of intersessional periods for advancing DTGs work. Questions may also arise regarding the financial and institutional resources required to sustain the Global Mechanism over time, including how to support broad and meaningful participation by all Member States, particularly when engagement may require technical expertise and participation from capital-based experts beyond permanent missions in New York.

Overall, the consensus agreement to establish a permanent Global Mechanism on ICT Security reflects collective recognition that governance of ICT-related security challenges requires sustained focus, inclusivity and structured flexibility. In this sense, the Global Mechanism is both the product of past negotiations and a framework for future ones, embedding international ICT security discussions within a stable yet flexible institutional United Nations architecture.