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Item 3 – General Debate

Joint Statement on behalf of a group of States

Ms. Ms. Lubna Qassim Mohamed Yousouf ALBASTAKI
Minister Plenipotentiary, Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates
to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva

Mr. Vice-President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Bahrain, Israel, Morocco, and the United States of America, a group of States that recently participated in the signing of peace accords.

Every single day, millions of people continue to forge in-person and online connections. Technology has established connectivity between people from different ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and national backgrounds, promoting coexistence and religious tolerance. Moreover, it has helped build empathy and understanding between different peoples worldwide.

The use of digital technology can be an important tool in achieving peace and promoting coexistence between cultures and societies. We therefore call on stakeholders to make human rights and peacebuilding an integral part of conversations around improving transparency and accountability when it comes to technology.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when social distancing prevented communities from meeting in person, digital platforms ensured that messages of peace, communication and dialogue could take root and grow. People spoke together, many for the first time, through social media, blogs, podcasts, and online forums. As a result, friendships developed beyond geographical boundaries, and we hope that in the coming years such friendships can contribute to positive change and a culture of peace and mutual respect.

However, COVID-19 also highlighted the digital divide, which exists in all our societies. In order to bridge this gap, we must invest in access to technology and the internet.

Mr. Vice-President,

We also recognize that the rapid rise of digital technology has brought with it numerous human rights concerns. We reaffirm, therefore, that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, in particular freedom of expression, which is applicable regardless of

frontiers and through any media of one's choice, in accordance with articles 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We must also work together, to counter the spread of disinformation, discrimination, hate speech and bullying online.

However, the evidence is clear that technology can and must be used as a tool for good and to advance peace, dialogue and understanding around the world. To achieve this goal, and to deliver the undoubted and much-needed benefits, it is essential for us to work together, including at this Council, to encourage multi-stakeholder engagement and a human rights-based approach.

I thank you.

List of co-sponsoring countries

1. Bahrain
2. Israel
3. Morocco
4. United Arab Emirates
5. United States of America