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Permanent Mission of Switzerland
to the United Nations

To all Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers
to the United Nations
New York

New York, 27.04.2020

Excellency,

I have the honour of addressing you in my capacity as Chair of the Open-ended Working Group on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security ("OEWG").

I would like to express my gratitude for the high number and quality of comments we received from delegations on the pre-draft, particularly in the context of the current difficult circumstances. While continuing to evaluate, together with my team, your comments, I would like to provide you with an update on our OEWG process.

As already indicated in my previous letters, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, our original work plan is no longer feasible. At the same time, current developments underline the importance of the issues that the OEWG is dealing with. To fulfill our mandate, I therefore intend to adapt the work plan for our way forward in preparation of our third and final substantive session.

Based on the comments received on the pre-draft, I will prepare, in collaboration with my Support Team, a revised draft of the report and send it to delegations around mid-May.

Subsequently, I will schedule a number of informal virtual meetings for a general exchange of views between delegations on the revised draft. I believe that at this point in the OEWG process, we need to continue our interactive discussions using the means at our disposal. I would like to reiterate that it is not my intention to discuss or negotiate the text line by line, regardless of the format of our meetings.

Within what is technically feasible, I aim to schedule the informal virtual meetings in a way that should allow capital delegations to participate. We are currently exploring the technical details and rely in this regard on the guidance from the Secretariat. Unfortunately technological constraints do not currently permit interpretation into official UN languages during virtual meetings, and our meetings will therefore have to be conducted in English only. I apologize for the inconvenience, and thank you for your understanding.

I shall send out the dates, agenda and technical details of the informal virtual meetings as soon as possible, to give you the opportunity to familiarize yourself with the details and make appropriate preparations for the exchange.

Following the informal virtual meetings, I intend to prepare the Zero Draft and send it to delegations in due time to allow for preparations ahead of the final OEWG session.

For the time being, we continue with the preparations for the third and final substantive session from 6 to 10 July 2020 in the traditional, in-person format, but are constantly reassessing the impact of the current situation on our OEWG process in consultation with the Secretariat. I will inform delegations in a timely manner if further adjustments become necessary.

I remain firmly committed to continue our work towards a successful completion of our mandate.

I also remain at delegations' disposal at all times for bilateral exchange, albeit for the time being not in person.

Once again, as we all traverse a very challenging time, I would like to convey to all of you, as well as to your families, friends and colleagues, my sincere wishes of health, well-being, hope, and resilience.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JL' or similar initials, written in a cursive style.

Jürg Lauber
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
Chair of the Open-ended Working Group