The Kingdom of the Netherlands

Cybersecurity Capacity Building and the Sustainable Development Goals

As the international community relies more and more on new technologies and a connected environment, supporting cyber capacity building contributes to the achievement of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this paper, we focus on the impact of capacity building on certain SDGs that will particularly benefit from a free, open and secure cyberspace. In the ongoing discussions of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) and the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE), a great number of delegations raised the importance of cyber capacity building and the SDGs.

The aim of this non-paper is to bridge the gap between the discussions on cyber capacity building and the SDGs. Although this is an ongoing process and discussion, the Netherlands considers the recommendations set forth in this non-paper as a fruitful and constructive contribution for the upcoming GGE and OEWG. In order to improve and maintain a free, open and secure internet, it is essential to bridge the digital divide. Ensuring a resilient infrastructure, reducing inequalities, assisting developing countries through capacity building will contribute to creating a more reliable, secure and trusted digital environment.

Building Cybersecurity Capacity

The cyber domain is dynamic and rapidly changing. Therefore, it is necessary for all stakeholders to adapt and continually improve their capabilities to address the potential risks that might arise. Different levels of capacity for ICT security among different States can increase vulnerability in an interconnected world. In its 2010 report, the GGE stresses the importance of capacity building, especially in developing countries. Consequently, in 2013 the GGE called upon the international community to work together in providing assistance and bridging the divide in the security of ICTs and their use. According to the report, capacity building measures can help tackle this divide and ultimately contribute to the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 8, which aims to develop a global partnership for development. The GGE’s most recent report, from 2015, adds that all States can learn from each other. Several UNGA resolutions regarding the global culture of cybersecurity emphasize the importance of capacity building, bridging the digital divide and the need for a multi-stakeholder approach. Resolutions 64/211, 58/199 and 57/239 state that closing the digital divide can be achieved by facilitating capacity building. In developing countries in particular, the facilitation of capacity building can contribute to improving access to digital systems and resources, protecting critical infrastructures and taking measures in cybersecurity.

In its report “The Age of Digital Interdependence”, the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation urges the international community to “join together in a spirit of cooperation and inclusiveness” to ensure an inclusive digital economy and society. We would like to highlight the report’s statement that “capacity development could help to harness technology for inclusive economic development to achieve the SDGs”.

The Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The goals are interconnected and, in turn, all relate to topics in the digital domain. UNGA Resolution 70/125 affirms the crosscutting contribution

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4 United Nations, General Assembly A/64/211, A/RES/58/199, A/RES/57/239 Creation of a global culture of cybersecurity and taking stock of national efforts to protect critical information infrastructures.
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of ICTs to the SDGs.6 The resolution recognizes that increased connectivity, innovation and access played a critical role in enabling progress on the Millennium Development Goals, the former SDGs. Access to ICTs has become a development indicator and aspiration in and of itself. The UNGA calls upon all Governments, the private sector, civil society, international organizations, the technical and academic communities and all other relevant stakeholders to integrate ICTs into their approaches to implementing the Goals. By harnessing the potential of ICTs, progress across all 17 SDGs can be accelerated, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can be achieved. Out of the SDG’s 17 goals and 169 targets, not a single one is detached from the implications and potential of digital technology.7 Nonetheless, there are several SDGs that specifically refer to cybersecurity-related topics, inter alia SDG 9 on resilient infrastructure, SDG 10 on reducing inequality and SDG 5 on gender equality.

**Building Resilient Infrastructure – Sustainable Development Goal 9**

Due to our increasing reliance on digitalization, communities are becoming more vulnerable to cyberoperations. This makes capacity building all the more essential and urgent, as sharing cybersecurity measures helps secure new ICT systems. These include systems integrated in critical infrastructure such as ports and hospitals and systems that deliver water, sanitation and energy. Therefore, a strong culture of cybersecurity and the importance of being able to quickly address and recover from an incident becomes more and more crucial. The more we rely on digitalization, the more important it is to build a resilient digital infrastructure.

SDG 9 concerns quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, inclusive and sustainable industrialization and scientific research. More specifically, target 9.C aims to “significantly increase access to ICTs and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020”8. In order to achieve these goals, it is important to invest in raising awareness, training and building capacity. In this way, parties that are more vulnerable can gain the tools to more promptly and correctly address incidents, malicious activities or attacks.

The GGE has also addressed the importance of a resilient digital environment. According to its 2010 report, differences in national laws and practices can create challenges to achieving secure and resilient digital environments.9 Consequently, the GGE recommends close international cooperation in order to ensure global ICT security, to assist developing countries in their efforts to enhance the security of their critical national information infrastructure and to bridge the current divide in ICT security. SDG 9 and the GGE reports show the importance of building a global resilient infrastructure. In order to achieve this, it is essential to invest in building capacity and assist developing countries in strengthening their cybersecurity capabilities.

**Reducing Inequalities in the Cyber Domain – Sustainable Development Goal 10**

Another important goal for the UN involves the reduction of disparities of opportunity, income and power within and among nations.10 These inequalities also apply to the digital domain, as certain groups lack affordable access to internet or digital tools and resources that are tailored to their needs and interests. Consequently, they are excluded from the benefits of digitalization. The digital divide not only by gender, but also by, for instance, income, level of education and geographical location is persistent. The Global Cybersecurity Index, developed by the ITU,

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8 https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg9
10 https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg10
The Kingdom of the Netherlands non-paper demonstrates the global divide in cybersecurity commitment among different countries. According to the ITU, sustainable development in this area is necessary to ensure the resilient and adequate use of ICTs.

One of the goals of cyber capacity building is to narrow this digital divide. More specifically, bridging the digital divide will contribute to the attainment of SDG 10 which aims to reduce inequality within and among countries. Since protecting the integrity of people’s information should be a priority, uneven access to the cyber domain can disadvantage developing countries and exacerbates inequalities. The UNGA supports the notion that capacity building is an important element in the attainment of the SDGs. Resolutions 64/211, 58/199 and 57/239 state that closing the digital divide can be achieved by facilitating capacity building. In developing countries in particular, capacity building can contribute to improving access to digital systems and resources, protecting critical infrastructures and taking measures in cybersecurity. The UN GGE endorses the notion that capacity building is of vital importance because it can help bridge the divide in security of ICTs. The UN GGE 2013 report recommends supporting the development and awareness raising with respect to ICT security to overcome the digital divide. Reducing inequalities through building capacity is thus central to achieving the SDGs.

**Bridging the Digital Gender Divide – Sustainable Development Goal 5**

At the Internet Governance Forum in 2019, UN Secretary-General Guterres warned of the widening gender gap in connectivity and the underrepresentation of women in the ICT sector. This digital gender divide aggravates the social divide, and consequently, undermines all SDGs. SDG 5 is specifically devoted to gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. The UN promotes the inclusion of women and girls in the emerging global ICT society. To illustrate, target 5.B aims to promote the empowerment of women by enhancing the use of enabling technology, in particular ICTs. Studies suggest that cybersecurity inequalities exacerbate existing gender inequalities. Capacity building to improve use of ICTs is thus an important element for the attainment of SDG 5.

UNGA resolution 70/125 highlights SDG 5, acknowledging the persistence of the digital gender divide. Women have less access to ICTs, including in education, employment and other areas of economic and social development. The resolution calls for “immediate measures to achieve gender equality in Internet users by 2020, especially by significantly enhancing women’s and girls’ education and participation in ICTs, as users, content creators, employees, entrepreneurs, innovators and leaders”. The resolution further reaffirms the UNGA’s commitment to ensure women’s full participation in decision-making processes related to ICTs. Cyber capacity building is thus an important element in closing the digital gender divide.

**Principles and best-practices for Cybersecurity Capacity Building**

To turn the ideas behind this non-paper into action, the Netherlands has initiated and currently supports multiple initiatives in the field of cyber capacity building and the SDGs. These include

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12 https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg10
14 United Nations, General Assembly A/64/211, A/RES/58/199, A/RES/57/239 Creation of a global culture of cybersecurity and taking stock of national efforts to protect critical information infrastructures
18 https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sgd5
19 United Nations, General Assembly, A/RES/70/125 Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society,
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The Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE), the Digital Agenda for Foreign Trade and Development (BHOS) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the World Bank’s Digital Development Partnership. These initiatives, which aim to achieve an inclusive, people-centered and development-oriented information society and cyber domain, can considered examples of bridging the gap between cybersecurity capacity building and the SDG’s.

The GFCE was launched by the Netherlands in 2015. The GFCE serves as a global, multi-stakeholder, multidisciplinary platform that strives to identify, develop and exchange successful policies, best practices and ideas on cyber capacity building and to multiply these on a global level. The GFCE facilitates and coordinates knowledge and expertise for the implementation of cyber capacity building based on five themes of the Delhi Communiqué. One of the themes encompasses cyber incident management and critical information infrastructure protection, which are foundational prerequisites for the resilience of today’s critical infrastructure. The GFCE contributes to the attainment of the SDGs, and specifically SDG 9 on resilient infrastructure, by sharing best practices and expertise on this theme. Through its Women in Cyber Capacity Building Network, launched in Addis Ababa in October 2019, the GFCE aims to contribute to bridging the digital gender divide, addressed in SDG 5.

In support of more effective capacity building co-operation, based on mutual trust between all parties involved, the Delhi Communiqué endorsed four shared principles:

1. **Ownership**: nations need to take ownership of capacity building priorities focus on sustainable developments;
2. **Sustainability**: obtaining sustainable positive impact should be the driving force for cyber capacity building;
3. **Inclusive partnerships and shared responsibility**: effective cyber capacity building requires cooperation among nations, through a multi-stakeholder approach;
4. **Trust, transparency and accountability**: transparency and accountability play a key role in establishing trust, which is necessary for effective cooperation.

The Netherlands acknowledges that cybersecurity and freedom online are major conditions for a smoothly functioning digital economy and society. In 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs published the Digital Agenda for Foreign Trade and Development (BHOS), which analyzes the opportunities and threats presented by digitalization. Important themes that are addressed include cybersecurity, economic security, human rights safeguards and data protection. As stated in the agenda, the Netherlands supports developing countries to safeguard their digital domain and strengthen freedom online. Capacity building can bridge the digital gap between technologically developed and less developed countries and provide developing countries with the benefits of the global digitalization.

Lastly, the Netherlands supports the Digital Development Partnership (DDP), launched by the World Bank to help implement the SDGs. The DDP brings public and private sector partners together and serves as a platform for digital innovation and development financing. The Netherlands specifically contributes to the DDP’s focus area on cybersecurity. The aim of this focus is to help advance the capacity of States in the development of cybersecurity policies and standards and support good practices in the use of cybersecurity tools, safeguards and risk management instruments.

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21 https://www.thegfce.com/about
22 Delhi Communiqué on a GFCE Global Agenda for Cyber Capacity Building.
Conclusion and recommendations

In this paper, we have outlined the many ways in which cyber capacity building and the Sustainable Development Goals are interlinked. Building cyber capacity proves essential in order to work towards achieving all 17 SDGs, and, as we argued in this paper, specifically goals 9 on resilient infrastructure, 10 on reducing inequality and 5 on gender equality. In order to improve and maintain a free, open and secure internet, it is essential to bridge the digital divide that exists between technologically developing and developed countries. Therefore, we encourage the GGE and OEWG to take consideration of the link between cyber capacity building and the achievement of the SDGs as discussed in this non-paper. More specifically, we recommend the GGE and OEWG to:

1. Recognize the relation between cyber capacity building and achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030;
2. Integrate the UN Sustainable Development Goals in cyber capacity building initiatives;
3. Endorse the four principles for cyber capacity building from the Delhi Communiqué:
   i. Ownership;
   ii. Sustainability;
   iii. Inclusive partnerships and shared responsibility;
   iv. Trust, transparency and accountability.
4. Use the principles outlined in this non-paper to strengthen cyber capacity building and support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.