

Template Guidelines for the Request for Consultation (RFC) on the Definition of Stability of Cyberspace of the Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace (GCSC)

We kindly ask you to use the following general format:

1. **Survey information:** To categorize your response, please make sure to identify yourself and state your affiliation, clearly indicating if you are either a government (including international and regional organizations), civil society (including NGOs, academia, advocacy groups, technical community, or similar), or private sector actor.
2. **Introduction:** Please provide one paragraph with general comments on the definition.
3. **Targeted comments:** When proposing edits to individual words or sections, please highlight the word or section you are referring to, followed by comments or edits.
4. **Mission:** In all cases, please keep in mind the mission statement of the GCSC.¹

We kindly ask that you follow this template and use these headers when providing comments:

1. **Wording:** Are there specific wording issues with the draft definition? If so, please identify and explain the respective words or clauses (Would this wording have unintended, potentially negative consequences? Would it miss some of the intended impact?), and offer an alternative wording, describing how it serves a different purpose.
2. **Scope:** Is the definition as stated of adequate scope? If not, please identify and explain the issue (Is the definition too narrow to exhaustively cover all elements of stability of cyberspace? Is the definition too broad to be meaningfully applied in practice?), and offer suggestions for improvement, describing how these would alter the scope of the definition and which effect(s) this would have.
3. **Explanation:** Is the draft definition sufficiently, comprehensively and adequately contextualized? If not, please identify and explain the (lack of) information in the text (Are there aspects not mentioned in the explanatory text that merit further consideration? Are parts of the explanatory text redundant?), and offer suggestions for deletion, addition or clarification, accompanied by a substantiation of how this would improve the definition as a whole.
4. **Examples:** Are there any instances you are aware of where the condition(s) as described in the draft definition was achieved, maintained or breached? If so, please provide us with a description of the incident or event and explain how it relates to the proposed definition.
5. **Supporting Documents:** Are there documents or public declarations that tackle a similar or related issue? If so, please provide us with a link so the Commission can decide whether to reference said document(s) in its final report.

Please be succinct in your response and bear in mind that overly comprehensive and all-inclusive explanations, while important for other texts, is not the objective.

¹ GCSC mission statement: The Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace (GCSC) engages the full range of stakeholders to develop proposals for norms and policies to enhance international security and stability, and guide responsible state and non-state behavior in cyberspace.

Contents

<<*begin quote*>>

Draft Definition of Stability of Cyberspace

Stability of cyberspace is the condition where individuals and institutions can be reasonably confident in their ability to use cyberspace safely and securely, where the availability and integrity of services in cyberspace is generally assured, where change is managed in relative peace, and where tensions are resolved in a peaceful manner.

While the Commission's definition builds on the standard definition of "stability",² it is more nuanced in two ways. First, there is the reference to user "confidence." Confidence is important because human decisions may be based upon perceptions, not just facts, and if someone *perceives* a lack of stability, (s)he may be reluctant to leverage cyberspace and obtain its benefits. By way of example, cyberspace may streamline processes and make them more efficient, thus suggesting that Internet voting could greatly increase voter participation. But if voting systems are unreliable – or there is a perception that such systems could be unreliable, causing voters to be sceptical about election results – then the benefits of this technology may be lost.

Second, it must be remembered that cyberspace is a domain of constant change. There are changes in technology, in business models, in functionality, and in societal expectations about the role of technology in daily life. Thus, unlike the dictionary definition of "stability" which includes "returning to an original condition," what cyberspace needs is the ability to adjust but remain stable. Simply put, users must remain confident in the availability and integrity of cyberspace even as it – and the world around it – changes.

Finally, as we discuss later in this report, we recognize that stability is based on adherence to existing international law (including international human rights law), common understandings of acceptable behavior, predictability, confidence building measures facilitated through capacity building, and by the open promulgation and widespread use of technical standards that ensure cyberspace is resilient.

<< *end quote*>>

² "Stability" is defined as (1) not likely to give way or overturn; firmly fixed; (2) not likely to change or fail; firmly established; and (3) not liable to undergo physical changes. See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/stable>.

Overview

Purpose: This public consultation procedure seeks to solicit comments and obtain feedback on the definition of “Stability of Cyberspace”, as developed by the Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace (GCSC). The definition constitutes an important element of the GCSC Report that the Commission aims to launch in November 2019. For the same purposes, the Commission previously issued a Request for Consultations (RFC) on its [Singapore Norm Package](#), which contains a set of newly proposed global norms to guide responsible state and non-state behavior in cyberspace.

Consultation period: Open from 14 August until 6 September 2019.

Methodology: Submit your feedback using the Template Guidelines to the GCSC Secretariat (cyber@hcss.nl) by COB 6 September 2019.

Current status: The proposed definition of Stability of Cyberspace is the result of contributions and consultations by GCSC Commissioners and the expert advisors, as well as consultations and joint meetings with external stakeholders. The intent of this RFC is to facilitate and encourage broader feedback from external stakeholders on the current deliberations of the Commission on its final report – in particular on the definition of Stability of Cyberspace as formulated below.

Next steps: Once public comments have been received, the GCSC Consultation team (consisting of the GCSC Secretariat and Chairs of the Research Advisory Group) will collect the received comments and present them to the Commissioners at the next GCSC meeting. The GCSC may consider to implement the suggestions and/or feedback in the GCSC Report to be published by Q4 2019. All submissions will be handled confidentially and will only be read and used internally by the GCSC.

Questions

More details about the RFC, the GCSC, and the definition of Stability of Cyberspace are available on the [GCSC website](#).

Please do not hesitate to reach out to the GCSC Secretariat (cyber@hcss.nl) should you have any doubts or questions with regard to the RFC or the Template Guidelines.