

FACT SHEET

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

The issue of information security has been on the UN agenda since the Russian Federation first introduced a draft resolution in 1998 on the subject in the First Committee of the UN General Assembly. It was adopted without a vote by the General Assembly as resolution 53/70. Since that time there have been annual resolutions calling for the views of UN Member States on the issue of information security.

Groups of Governmental Experts

There have been four Groups of Governmental Experts (GGEs) that have examined the existing and potential threats from the cyber-sphere and possible cooperative measures to address them.

The first 15-member Group was established in 2004 but did not agree on a substantive report. Information on the procedural matters of the Group's work was published as UN document A/60/202. Disagreement among the experts emerged primarily over two substantive policy issues. The first issue was the question of the impact of developments in information and communications technologies (ICTs) on national security and military affairs. While there was general agreement regarding the importance of such developments, consensus could not be found on the amount of emphasis to be placed on this concern, and whether or not to include language that stressed the new threats posed by State exploitation of ICTs for military and national security purposes. The second issue was the question of whether the discussion should address issues of information content or whether it should focus only on information infrastructure. There was particular disagreement regarding the claim that trans-border information content should be controlled as a matter of national security. Other areas of disagreement arose on proposals for capacity-building and technology transfer to developing countries.

The second 15-member Group was established in 2009. A successful GGE report was issued in 2010 (A/65/201). The 2009/2010 GGE recommended the following in its report:

- Dialogue on norms for State use of ICTs to reduce risk and protect critical infrastructure;
- Confidence-building and risk-reduction measures, including discussion of ICTs in conflict;
- Information exchanges on national legislation and national ICT security strategies, policies and technologies;
- Capacity-building in less-developed countries; and
- Elaboration of common terms and definitions on information security.

GGE in 2012/2013

In 2011, the General Assembly unanimously approved resolution 66/24, in which it called for a follow-up GGE. This third Group had three one-week meetings in 2012/2013. Ms. Deborah Stokes (Australia) was unanimously elected as Chair of the Group.

The Group's report (A/68/98*) was submitted to the UN General Assembly in June 2013.

The Group agreed on the following:

- International law, in particular the UN Charter, is applicable to the cyber-sphere and is essential for an open, secure, peaceful and accessible ICT environment
- State sovereignty applies to States' conduct of ICT-related activities and to their jurisdiction over ICT infrastructure within their territory.
- State efforts to address the security of ICTs must go hand-in-hand with respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- States must not use proxies to commit internationally wrongful acts and must ensure that their territories are not used by non-State actors for unlawful use of ICTs.
- The UN should play an important role in promoting dialogue among Member States.

"I appreciate the report's focus on the centrality of the Charter of the United Nations and international law as well as the importance of States exercising responsibility. The recommendations point the way forward for anchoring information and communications technology security in the existing framework of international law and understandings that govern State relations and provide the foundation for international peace and security. "

Secretary-General's foreword to the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security, June 2013

GGE in 2014/2015

On 27 December 2013, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 68/243 which requested the Secretary-General to establish a new GGE that would report to the General Assembly in 2015. The new GGE, with 20 experts, held four meetings between July 2014 and June 2015. Experts from the following Member States participated in the GGE: Belarus, Brazil, China, Colombia, Egypt, Estonia, France, Germany, Ghana, Israel, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom and United States of America. Mr. Carlos Luís Dantas Coutinho Perez (Brazil) chaired the Group.

The Group agreed on a substantive consensus report to be sent to the Secretary-General on norms, rules or principles of the responsible behaviour of States in the cyber-sphere as well as confidence building measures, international cooperation and capacity building which could have wider application to all States. It also addresses how International Law applies to the use of information and communications technologies and also makes recommendations for future work. It will be released later this summer and presented to the General Assembly in September.

UN Office for Disarmament Affairs

The Office for Disarmament Affairs has provided substantive support to the expert Groups and has acted as the secretariat assisting in the preparation of the Group's reports.

For more information: www.un.org/disarmament/topics/informationsecurity

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