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 General Assembly 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 two Groups of Governmental Experts (GGE) that have examined the existing and potential threats from the cyber-sphere and possible cooperative measures to address them.

The first fifteen-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 should focus only on information infrastructures. 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.

In 2007, the General Assembly adopted its traditional resolution calling for Member States’ views but also included a call for the establishment of a follow-up GGE to meet in 2009/2010.

The second fifteen-member Group was established in 2009. A successful GGE report was issued in 2010 (A/65/201).

The report of the 2009/2010 GGE recommends:

- dialogue on norms for State use of information and communications technologies (ICTs), to reduce risk and protect critical infrastructures;
- confidence-building and risk reduction measures, including discussion of ICTs in conflict;

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• information exchanges on national legislation and national ICT security strategies, policies and technologies;
• capacity-building in less developed countries;
• the elaboration of common terms and definitions on Information Security.

“Considerable progress has been made in addressing the implications of the new technologies. But the task is arduous and we have only begun to develop the norms, laws and modes of cooperation needed for this new information environment. The present report is meant to serve as an initial step towards building the international framework for security and stability that these new technologies require.”

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” July 2010

New GGE in 2012/13

In 2011, the General Assembly unanimously approved a resolution (66/24) calling for a follow-up to the last GGE. This third GGE will have three one week meetings. The first meeting was held in New York in August 2012, the second took place in Geneva in January 2013, and the last will take place in June of 2013 in New York.

Experts from the following Member States are participating in the GGE: Argentina, Australia, Belarus, Canada, China, Egypt, Estonia, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom and United States of America. Ms. Deborah Stokes (Australia) was unanimously elected to Chair the Group.

Mandate of the new Group

The United Nations General Assembly, in resolution 66/24 (2011), *inter alia,*

“Requests the Secretary-General, with the assistance of a group of governmental experts, to be established in 2012 on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, taking into account the assessments and recommendations contained in report A/65/201, to continue to study existing and potential threats in the sphere of information security and possible cooperative measures to address them, including norms, rules or principles of responsible behaviour of States and confidence-building measures with regard to information space, as well as relevant international concepts aimed at strengthening the security of global information and telecommunications systems and to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session a report on the results of this study.” The Group’s report will be submitted to the 68th session of the UN General Assembly in 2013.

The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

The Office for Disarmament Affairs provides substantive support to the expert Group and acts as the secretariat assisting in the preparation of the Group’s report.

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

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