United Nations Office for
Disarmament Affairs

FACT SHEET

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

Developments in the field of information and telecommunications ICTs in the context of international security have 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 General Assembly (GA). 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

Since this issue has been on the agenda, there have been five Groups of Governmental Experts (GGEs) that have convened alternately in New York and Geneva. The Groups have examined existing and potential threats in the cyber-sphere and possible cooperative measures to address them. In December 2018, the General Assembly has established both a new Group of Governmental Experts and an Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) to continue these discussions for the period of 2019-2021 and 2019-2020 respectively.

Period	Mechanism	Resolution	Meetings	Report	Comments
2004/2005	GGE – 15 members	A/RES/58/32	2 in NY, 2 in Geneva	A/60/202	No consensus
2009/2010	GGE – 15 members	A/RES/60/45	2 in NY, 2 in Geneva	A/65/201	
2012/2013	GGE – 15 members	A/RES/66/24	2 in NY, 2 in Geneva	A/68/98*	
2014/2015	GGE – 20 members	A/RES/68/243	2 in NY, 2 in Geneva	A/70/174	
2016/2017	GGE – 25 members	A/RES/70/237	2 in NY, 2 in Geneva	A/72/327	No consensus
2019-2020	OEWG – all member states	A/RES/73/27	4 in NY;		
2019-2021	GGE – 25 members	A/RES/73/266	2 in NY, 2 in Geneva		

The first, 15-member Group was established in 2004. It examined the impact of developments in information and communications technologies (ICTs) on national security and military affairs. The experts also considered whether their discussions should focus on information *content* or only on information *infrastructure*. The Group was unable to produce a consensus report.

The second 15-member Group was established in 2009 and a successful GGE report was issued in 2010 (A/65/201), which included the following elements in its recommendations:
- 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 ICT security strategies; and
- Capacity-building in less-developed countries.

A third Group comprised of 15 members met in 2012/2013. In its report (A/68/98*), 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.

GGE in 2014/2015

In 2014 and 2015, a new GGE convened. The Group agreed on a substantive consensus report (A/70/174) 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 makes recommendations for future work. Its findings include:

- In their use of ICTs, States must observe, among other principles of international law, State sovereignty, the settlement of disputes by peaceful means, and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States.
- Existing obligations under international law are applicable to State use of ICTs and States must comply with their obligations to respect and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- States must not use proxies to commit internationally wrongful acts using ICTs and should seek to ensure that their territory is not used by non-State actors to commit such acts.
- The UN should play a leading role in promoting dialogue on the security of ICTs in their use by States, and in developing common understandings on the application of international law and norms, rules and principles for responsible State behaviour.

In December 2015, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 70/237, which welcomed the 2015 report of the Group and called upon Member States to be guided by the report in their use of information and communications technologies.

GGE in 2016/17

In 2016 and 2017, a new Group was formed to exchange of views on developments in the field of ICTs in the context of international security. The Group built on the reports of previous groups and considered the following issues: existing and emerging threats; capacity-building; confidence-building; recommendations on the implementation of norms, rules and principles for the responsible behaviour of States; application of international law to the use of information and communications technologies; and conclusions and recommendations for future work. No consensus was reached on a final report (A/72/327).

New ways forward in 2019-2021

In December 2018, the General Assembly established two processes to discuss the issue of ICT security during the period of 2019-2021. Through resolution 73/27, it established an Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG), which is open to all Member States. The Chair of the Group is Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations in New York. The Group will begin its work in 2019 and will report back to the General Assembly in 2020. As a new element, the OEWG will hold an intersessional consultative meeting with industry, civil society and academia.

During the same session, the General Assembly established another GGE in resolution 73/266. Comprised of 25 members, the Group is chaired by Ambassador Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota of Brazil. It will hold its first meeting in December 2019 and is to submit its final report to the General Assembly in 2021. The Group's Chair will hold consultations with the wider membership in between sessions. The mandate also includes consultations on the subject to be held with regional organizations, such as the African Union, the European Union, the Organization of American States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Regional Forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

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 Groups' reports.

For more information: www.un.org/disarmament/ict-security