

GGE PAROS Report 2024

The document covers practical measures to prevent an arms race in outer space, including the creation of a UN government expert group.

Creation of the second Group of Government Experts

The second Group of Governmental Experts was established to recommend international measures to prevent an arms race in space, in connection with the first GGE PAROS Group of 2018-2019, which had not found a consensus on the final report. The new Group, composed of 25 government experts, with a focus on geographical and gender representation (nine states have nominated women), was created in response to General Assembly resolution 77/250 and held two sessions in Geneva in 2023 and 2024.

Group Activities and Consultations

The Group conducted meetings and consultations from 20 November to 1 December 2023 and from 5 to 16 August 2024, as well as informal online consultations on 8 May and 10 July 2024.

Reflections on the Geopolitical Context

The Group's work has taken place in a complex geopolitical context, characterised by growing mistrust and the risk of misunderstandings. International security, influenced by a growing number of state and non-state actors in space, is no longer dominated by the two superpowers.

1. The use of space is integrated into essential services such as communications and humanitarian operations.
2. Every state has an interest in maintaining a stable and secure space environment.

Threats and Prevention Measures

The Group examined threats in space and discussed practical measures to prevent an arms race. Threats were analyzed in relation to four main vectors.

1. Space threats include Earth-to-space, space-to-Earth, space-to-space, and Earth-to-Earth interactions.
2. Threats can be kinetic or non-kinetic, with reversible or irreversible effects.

3. A comprehensive understanding of threats is needed to come up with effective measures.

Importance of International Law

The Group stressed the importance of international law and the 1967 Space Treaty to prevent an arms race. Compliance with existing rules is key to building trust between states.

1. The Space Treaty is considered the basis of international space law.
2. It is necessary to ensure that the Treaty is in conformity and universalized.
 - However, there are divergent views on the applicability of international humanitarian law in space.

Binding and non-binding measures

The Group discussed the need for binding and non-binding measures to prevent an arms race in space. Both types of measures can contribute to this objective in a complementary way.

1. Measures that are not binding at international level may be binding at national level.
2. It is important to prevent the measures from negatively impacting national interests.
3. It has been proposed to consider optional protocols to the Space Treaty.

General Considerations on the Prevention of the Space Arms Race

The Group agreed that a legally binding agreement to prevent the arms race in space must be practical, clear and non-discriminatory. It is crucial to establish common definitions and verification measures to ensure compliance and security.

1. The agreement must be practical, clear and non-discriminatory.
2. Definitions must be worked out during negotiations, drawing on terms that have already been agreed.
3. A multilateral approach is needed to ensure national security and economic interests.
4. Verification measures must provide credible evidence of compliance or non-compliance.

Definitions and Verification in the Spatial Context

The group stressed the importance of defining key terms to ensure a common understanding and facilitate the implementation of any proposed measures. Verification measures must be integrated into every stage of the negotiation process.

1. Agreement on key definitions is needed to facilitate implementation.
2. Definitions must be practical and clear, avoiding legal uncertainties.
3. Verification measures must be considered at every stage of trading.
4. The audit must respect the interests of national security and sustainable development.

Substantial Elements for the Prevention of the Arms Race

The Group discussed a number of substantive elements that could be included in an agreement to prevent the arms race in space, without aspiring to a consensus on all aspects.

1. The principles and obligations of the Outer Space Treaty need to be considered.
2. The measures must be consistent with the UN Charter.
3. It is important to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in the space context.
4. Further discussions are needed to identify areas of convergence.

Obligations and Conduct of States

The Group examined possible obligations for states, including prohibitions on intentional acts that damage or destroy space systems.

1. States must refrain from acts that threaten or damage space objects.
2. The intentional destruction of civilian space infrastructure must be prohibited.
3. The obligations must include the protection of space services for civilians.
4. It is important to establish measures for the safe conduct of space operations.

Transparency and Trust Building Measures

The Group recognized the importance of transparency and confidence-building measures to prevent the arms race in space.

1. Transparency measures can facilitate the resolution of disputes.
2. It is necessary to exchange information on space policies and military spending.

3. Notifications of space launches and maneuvers must be communicated to reduce risks.
4. The measures must be designed to be applicable to both states and non-state actors.

International Cooperation and Sustainable Development

The Group discussed elements of international cooperation, taking into account the needs of developing countries.

1. It is crucial to ensure equal access to space for all states.
2. States must facilitate the exchange of scientific technology and information.
3. It is important to consider international cooperation for mutual benefit.
4. The measures must avoid hampering economic and technological development.

Recommendations for the Future

The Group concluded that the report can serve as a reference for further international measures and negotiations.

1. It is necessary to continue to develop common definitions and understandings.
2. Further studies on verification and arms control measures are needed.
3. It is important to involve civil society and business actors in the process.
4. The recommendations are to be considered by the members of the United Nations for future deliberations.