Space and security

2008/2030(INI) - 03/06/2008

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted an own initiative report by Karl **WOGAU** (EPP-ED, DE) on Space and security.

MEPs note the need for a common approach for defending European interests in space. They underline the need for space assets in order that the political and diplomatic activities of the European Union may be based on independent, reliable and complete information in support of its policies for conflict prevention, crisis management operations and global security (especially the monitoring of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of transportation),verification of international treaties, the transnational smuggling of light weapons and small arms, the protection of critical infrastructure and of the European Union’s borders, and civil protection in the event of natural and man-made disasters and crises.

The report underlines the necessity of Galileo for autonomous ESDP operations, for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), for Europe’s own security and for the Union's strategic autonomy. It calls on Member States to ensure the interoperability of their diverse observation and reconnaissance systems and recommends the urgent conclusion of agreements between the EUSC and the EU Member States to provide imagery available to ESDP operation and force commanders.

The parliamentary committee deplores the fact that EU Member States do not have access to instant data on ballistic missile launches around the world and expresses support, therefore, for projects leading towards satellite-based early warning against ballistic missile launches. It also underscores the vulnerability of strategic space assets and the need for them to be adequately protected by ground-based theatre missile defence, planes and space surveillance systems.

The European Union is also called upon to establish an operational budget for space assets that serve to support the ESDP and European security interests. Alarmed by the lack of coordination among Member States, MEPs support the idea of the launching of joint programmes by the Member States, which will provide costs savings in the longer term. They also recommend that European non-commercial satellites be sent into orbit by European launchers from EU territory.

Lastly, the report calls on all international actors to refrain from using offensive equipment in space. MEPs express their particular concern about the use of destructive force against satellites, such as the Chinese anti-satellite system tested in January 2007 and the consequences of the massive increase in debris for space security. They recommend, therefore, the adoption of legally binding international instruments focusing on banning the use of weapons against space assets and the stationing of weapons in space. They also call on the EU institutions to promote a conference to review the Outer Space Treaty, with the aim of strengthening it and expanding its scope to prohibit all weapons in space.