Space and security

2008/2030(INI) - 10/07/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 483 votes to 99, with 20 abstentions, a resolution on Space and security.

The own initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Karl von **WOGAU** (EPP-ED, DE), on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

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.

Earth observation and reconnaissance: the resolution 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. The Parliament recommends the urgent conclusion of agreements between the European Union Satellite Centre (EUSC) and the EU Member States to provide imagery available to ESDP operation and force commanders while ensuring complementarity with Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) observation capacities. It also calls on the Member States to pool and exchange the geospatial intelligence necessary for autonomous EU threat assessment. MEPs urge the EU Member States with access to the various types of radar, optical and weather observation satellites and reconnaissance systems to make them compatible. Lastly, they urge the creation of an operational budget line to ensure the sustainability of GMES services in response to users' needs.

Telecommunications: MEPs underline the necessity of secure satellite-supported communication for ESDP operations and EU Member States' deployments under UN, NATO and other similar organisations. They request that the current and future satellite telecommunication systems at the disposal of the countries of the European Union be mutually interoperable in order to provide for cost reduction. They also support the possible funding of a future satellite telecommunication system, which supports ESDP operations, through the EU budget.

Satellite-based early warning against ballistic missiles: the Parliament 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 calls for information acquired through these future systems to be available to all Member States of the European Union in order to protect their population.

Autonomous access to space and international environment: the Parliament supports secure, independent and sustainable access to space for the European Union as one of the preconditions of its autonomous action. It recommends that the European non-commercial satellites be carried into orbit by European launchers, preferably from the territory of the European Union, bearing in mind the aspects of security of supply and protection of the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base. MEPs point out that it is necessary to increase the development effort for an enhanced Ariane 5 to be available before 2015 and recommend that strategic long-term investment in new European launchers be initiated as soon as possible.

Financing: the European Union is called upon to set up 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 point out that, as experience has shown, large-scale common projects cannot be properly managed when 27 different national budget authorities applying the principle of "fair return" are involved. They therefore strongly recommend that these projects and programmes be financed from the EU budget.

Protection of space infrastructure: the resolution underscores the vulnerability of strategic space assets and stresses the need for them to be adequately protected by ground-based theatre missile defence, planes and space surveillance systems. It calls for the vulnerability of future European satellite systems to be reduced while stressing that advanced communication should never be made fully dependent on space-based technologies.

International legal regime for uses of space: reiterating the importance of the principle of the use of space for peaceful purposes, the Parliament urges that under no circumstances should European space policy contribute to the overall militarisation and weaponisation of 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.