

RECOMMENDATION 766

on arms control and non-proliferation: verification by satellite

The Assembly,

- (i) Considering that it was only as of 1980, at the time of the Iran-Iraq war, that proliferation once again became a major international issue, when the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), chemical weapons in this instance, gave new impetus to the fight against proliferation;
- (ii) Recalling that Iraq – which, in addition to building up an arsenal of chemical weapons had engaged in a ballistic missile programme based on Scud missiles – was the central factor in those anti-proliferation efforts, and stressing that it had also shown the limitations of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) by launching a particularly advanced nuclear programme;
- (iii) Recalling also that the A.Q. Khan network – named after the Pakistani scientist considered to be the “father” of Pakistan’s nuclear bomb – although officially dismantled by the Pakistani authorities under pressure from the United States, would seem to be a veritable international grouping of proliferating states;
- (iv) Stressing that North Korea continues to be one of the most worrying cases as regards ballistic and nuclear proliferation;
- (v) Noting furthermore that the Iran crisis continues to unfold and that participation – with the EU Council’s approval – by three European states (France, Germany and the United Kingdom) in the negotiations on nuclear weapons proliferation has proved to be symbolic of Europe’s growing involvement in arms control and non-proliferation issues;
- (vi) Noting that, as a consequence, arms control and non-proliferation have become key objectives of the European Union which, in order to fulfil its ambition of becoming a major global force has drawn up a Security Strategy and a Strategy Against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction;
- (vii) Taking the view that the European Union must for that purpose acquire means of verification in order to ensure compliance with the treaties, as well as in the interests of its own security;
- (viii) Noting that satellite means are perfectly legal, since they do not violate the airspace of the country being observed, and that their ever-greater precision and growing numbers in orbit allows satellite images of acceptable quality to be produced of any spot in the world in reasonable timeframes;
- (ix) Taking the view that the major developments these past few years in the field of European space activities – such as the Galileo programme, the increasingly close ties between the EU and the European Space Agency (ESA) and the EU White Paper on space setting out an action plan for implementing European space policy – illustrate the EU’s efforts to become a key player in this area;
- (x) Stressing that although Europe, through ESA, has been present in the space sector for some considerable time, European cooperation in this area has been confined to scientific research, while observation for military purposes has been a matter for individual member states, France in particular, which so far is the only country – in cooperation with Belgium, Italy, Spain and soon Greece – to have developed military observation satellites (Helios);
- (xi) Noting that the next generation of European observation satellites will be produced on a purely national basis, even though cooperation among states has been strengthened to allow those systems to function in a complementary fashion;
- (xii) Welcoming in that respect Germany’s SAR-Lupe and TerraSAR programmes as well as the Franco-Italian cooperation initiative based on France’s Pleiades programme and Italy’s Cosmo-SkyMed programme;

(xiii) Recalling furthermore the five types of threat identified by the European Security Strategy: terrorism, regional conflicts, state failure, organised crime and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD);

(xiv) Noting that the European Defence Agency (EDA) was set up in response to the need to pool capabilities and that the European Capability Action Plan (ECAP) was launched in order to identify capability shortfalls and propose short- and medium-term solutions to remedy them;

(xv) Noting furthermore that the creation within the ECAP framework of a Space Group tasked with improving capabilities in the short term, developing them in the medium and long term and drawing up an operational concept and doctrine is of particular strategic interest for Europe;

(xvi) Considering that the inclusion of space-based assets in the ESDP guarantees a degree of strategic independence by providing continuous access to information;

(xvii) Stressing that satellite images are a crucial tool for the prevention of WMD proliferation and the verification of international treaties and that their interpretation is now the responsibility of the EU Satellite Centre (EUSC);

(xviii) Recalling that the EUSC provides support for Petersberg missions, general security, maritime and environmental surveillance missions and activities in the area of treaty monitoring, arms control and non-proliferation;

(xix) Noting, however, that although the EUSC provides information that is of undeniable strategic relevance, it does not for the moment offer a tactical intelligence capability, and that therefore, despite now being an integral part of the ESDP and involved throughout the decision-making process, its action will remain limited for as long as the European Union does not possess its own satellite capabilities;

(xx) Considering that from this perspective the ESA-Commission joint GMES (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security) initiative will strengthen the EUSC's image acquisition capacities and could therefore be the first step towards the creation one day of a European intelligence agency;

(xxi) Stressing that the aim of the GMES initiative is to group together all European earth observation activities;

(xxii) Considering that the Commission's interest in using the GMES system in support of the CFSP makes it necessary to clarify the respective roles of the Council and Commission in this area in order to avoid the duplication and tension that currently exists between the EUSC, which is answerable to the Council, and the Joint Research Centre (JRC), which is answerable to the Commission;

(xxiii) Considering that the Common Operational Requirements (known by their French acronym BOC) are the forerunners for a new European space cooperation architecture, possibly with a variable geometry;

(xxiv) Recalling furthermore the decision of the WEU Ministerial Council in 1995 to conduct a study in order to evaluate the possibilities for the participation, at the time, of WEU in a multilateral space observation programme,

RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL INVITE THE WEU MEMBER STATES AS MEMBERS OF THE EU TO:

1. Take up once again the idea put forward by the WEU Ministerial Council in 1995 and take the necessary steps for launching a genuine European military space observation programme;
2. Ensure that the European Union, through the European Defence Agency, groups together all those efforts by taking account of the need to:
 - establish a European standard for the construction of observation satellites by encouraging European or intergovernmental initiatives such as GMES and the Common Operating Requirements (BOC);

- give the EU Satellite Centre the necessary means to implement the ESDP by:
 - (a) giving it access to both the commercial and non-commercial images of the EU member states;
 - (b) allowing it to participate in the programming of European observation satellites;
 - (c) enabling it in the future to acquire a tactical capability to support Petersberg missions;
- 3. Allocate sufficient funds to the framing of a genuine European space policy, in order to avoid being dependent in this sensitive area on governments or companies outside the Union;
- 4. Offer European companies outlets for technological innovation in the space sector;
- 5. Strengthen ties between the EU and ESA with a view to establishing a link between the EDA and the ESA Security Office;
- 6. Make use of permanent structured cooperation in the space field on the model of the Common Operating Requirements (BOC) or of ESA's optional programmes;
- 7. Give preference to the capacities of the Kourou Space Centre in Guiana for launching European satellites.