

# **POSITION PAPER**

**Committee** – United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

**Country** – Belgium



**Agenda** – Evolution of surveillance technology for security purposes

Information technology plays a significant role in strengthening national security against future upcoming threats and cyber-attacks. Surveillance technology is increasingly being used by countries for intelligence gatherings such as to fight against espionage, prevention and investigation of crime, and protection of people and objects. It includes biometric systems, RFID tagging, wire tracking, the use of geolocation devices, data mining and profiling, etc.

The presence of several embassies and organizations along with the increased terrorist attacks and the inflow of refugees from the Middle East prompted the government of Belgium to reform the legal framework of the intelligence services and adopt new surveillance technology for the sake of national security.

Belgium was one of the first countries to start issuing electronic passports back in 2004. The new biometric passport which also includes fingerprints was issued in 2014. The Belgian passport is a

biometric passport with an electronic chip containing the passport holder's key personal details.

In 2015 Belgium increased the number of data collection methods used from 979 in 2014 to 1,143, especially in terrorism matters.

Belgium also signed a contract for the MQ-9B reaper drones with an intention of using them for domestic security. The US Department approved the sale of the same in March 2019.

With the increased use of surveillance technology one thing that needs to be kept in mind is that national security must not be at the expense of people's privacy. Following the adoption at the EU level of the Data Protection Reform Package in 2016, Belgium has reshaped its national data protection framework by transposing and executing or clarifying EU data protection law in National law.

The 'Camera Act' was introduced on 21 March 2018 to prevent the misuse of video surveillance technology thereby modifying an earlier Act on the installation and use of cameras. On 30 July 2018, Belgium introduced the 'Privacy Act'. It ensures increased protection of an individual's data when it is processed by police and criminal justice authorities.

EU's Data protection framework is an important step that is complementary to the developments that are taking place in surveillance technology at a steady pace. The adoption of a similar framework by more countries all around the world can prove to be a helpful move that will not only help strengthen national security but also make the citizens feel more secure.

We plan to allocate more resources towards digitalizing police operations, similarly, to counter global and national security challenges the countries should allocate more resources towards research and development for technological advancements, particularly towards security infrastructure.