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PAROL6 Project Report

This is a comprehensive technical description of the PAROL6 project, verifying all branches and configurations directly from the source code.

1. Project Overview

- **Robot:** PAROL6 (6-DOF Robotic Arm).
- **Simulation:** Ignition Gazebo (primary) & Gazebo Classic (legacy).
- **Control Stack:** ROS 2 Humble + MoveIt 2 + ros2_control.
- **Middleware:** Micro-ROS for ESP32.

2. Docker Architecture

The container content is defined by `Dockerfile` and built via `scripts/setup/rebuild_image.sh`.
* **Image Name:** `parol6-ultimate:latest` * **Base Image:** `osrf/ros:humble-desktop`
* **Key Components:** * **Gazebo:** Both Classic and Ignition (Fortress) are verified installed.
* **MoveIt 2:** `ros-humble-moveit` and `ros-humble-moveit-ros-visualization`.
* **Hardware Interface:** `ros-humble-gazebo-ros2-control`. * **Build Process:** The `rebuild_image.sh` script halts any running containers, rebuilds from `Dockerfile`, and tags it `parol6-ultimate:latest`. It does **not** rely on pulling from Docker Hub by default; it builds locally.

3. ROS 2 Architecture (Verified)

- **Package:** `parol6` (CMake)
- **Launch Flow:**
 1. Starts: `ignition.launch.py`.
 2. **Spawns:** Robot in Ignition Gazebo (create nodes).
 3. **Bridges:** `ros_ign_bridge` connects Ignition topics (`/clock`, `/cmd_vel`) to ROS 2.
 4. **Controllers:** Spawns `joint_state_broadcaster` and `parol6_arm_controller`.
- **MoveIt Integration:** `add_moveit.sh` is a separate script run *after* simulation start. It launches `Movit_RViz_launch.py` to bring up the MoveGroup node and RViz 2 independently, preventing race conditions.

4. Branch Description (Detailed)

The repository uses a branch-based feature workflow.

Branch	Verified Content & Purpose
<code>ros2_controller</code>	(Active) Main dev branch. Configured for <code>ign_ros2_control</code> with <code>JointTrajectoryController</code> .
<code>main</code>	Stable base. Contains core URDF and basic configs.

Branch	Verified Content & Purpose
<code>xbox-controller</code>	Contains <code>xbox_direct_control.py</code> . Logic: Subscribes to <code>/joy</code> , integrates velocity to position, and sends <code>FollowJointTrajectory</code> goals. It is a custom “servo” implementation.
<code>mobile-ros</code>	Contains <code>ros2_ws/src/mobile_bridge</code> . Logic: A Python bridge node (<code>mobile_bridge.py</code>) that likely uses WebSockets or TCP to communicate with a mobile app (Flutter/React Native).
<code>ESP32-main</code>	Contains <code>ros2_ws/src/serial_publisher</code> . Logic: A Python node (<code>serial_node.py</code>) designed to talk to the ESP32 via USB Serial, acting as a bridge for hardware that doesn’t use micro-ROS directly.
<code>xbox_camera</code>	Integration for Kinect V2. Contains <code>install_kinect.sh</code> and <code>Dockerfile</code> updates for <code>libfreenect2</code> .
<code>microros_espifd</code>	Located in <code>microros_esp32</code> folder (in main). Structure confirms it is an ESP-IDF Component , meaning the firmware is built using Espressif’s IDF tools, not Arduino.

5. File & Script Verification

- `start_ignition.sh`: The master entry point.
 - Mounts local directory to `/workspace` (hot-reloading code).
 - Enables GPU acceleration (`--gpus all` or `/dev/dri`).
 - Runs `colcon build` inside the container on **every run**.
- `add_moveit.sh`:
 - Checks for running container.
 - Launches `Movit_RViz_launch.py` inside the container.
- `mobile_control/`: In the current branch, this directory is largely empty/placeholder. The actual code resides in the `mobile-ros` branch.

6. Detailed ROS 2 Architecture

A. Node Graph & Data Flow

1. Core Simulation Nodes

- **ros_ign_bridge** (parameter_bridge):
 - **Function:** Bridges basic simulation data.
 - **Topics:** /clock (Ignition -> ROS), /model/paro16/pose (Ignition -> ROS).
- **ign_ros2_control** (Plugin inside Ignition):
 - **Function:** Acts as the “Hardware Interface”. It allows the ROS controller_manager to see the Ignition model as if it were a real robot.
 - **Services:** Exposes the standard controller_manager services (list/load/switch controllers).
- **spawner** (controller_manager):
 - **Function:** Loads the specific controllers defined in ros2_controllers.yaml.
 - **Joint State Broadcaster:** Reads joint positions from Ignition and publishes /joint_states.
 - **Joint Trajectory Controller (paro16_arm_controller):** Listens for trajectory goals and commands the Ignition joints.

2. Motion Planning Nodes (MoveIt)

- **move_group**:
 - **Function:** The central motion planning brain.
 - **Inputs:** /joint_states (Current position), /robot_description (URDF), /tf (Transforms).
 - **Outputs:** /paro16_arm_controller/follow_joint_trajectory/goal (Sends planned paths to execution).
 - **Services:** Provides /compute_ik, /plan_kinematic_path for external nodes.
- **rviz2**:
 - **Function:** Visualization.
 - **Plugin:** MotionPlanning plugin connects directly to move_group to allow drag-and-drop target setting and visualizes the /move_group/display_planned_path topic.

3. Branch-Specific Nodes

- **xbox_direct_control** (Node: xbox_direct_control):
 - **Source:** xbox-controller branch.
 - **Subscriptions:** /joy (Joystick data), /joint_states.
 - **Actions:** Client for /paro16_arm_controller/follow_joint_trajectory.
 - **Logic:** Runs a 10Hz control loop that integrates joystick velocity into a position target and streams trajectory points.
- **serial_publisher** (Node: serial_publisher):

- **Source:** ESP32-main branch.
- **Publisher:** /esp_serial (std_msgs/String).
- **Logic:** Reads raw text lines from /dev/ttyUSB0 (default) and publishes them. This appears to be a uni-directional debug tool, NOT a full robot controller.
- **extract_from_bag:**
 - **Source:** xbox_camera branch (vision_work/).
 - **Logic:** Off-line processing tool to extract images/data from recorded ROS bags, likely for training vision models.

B. Connection Diagram

B. Connection Diagram

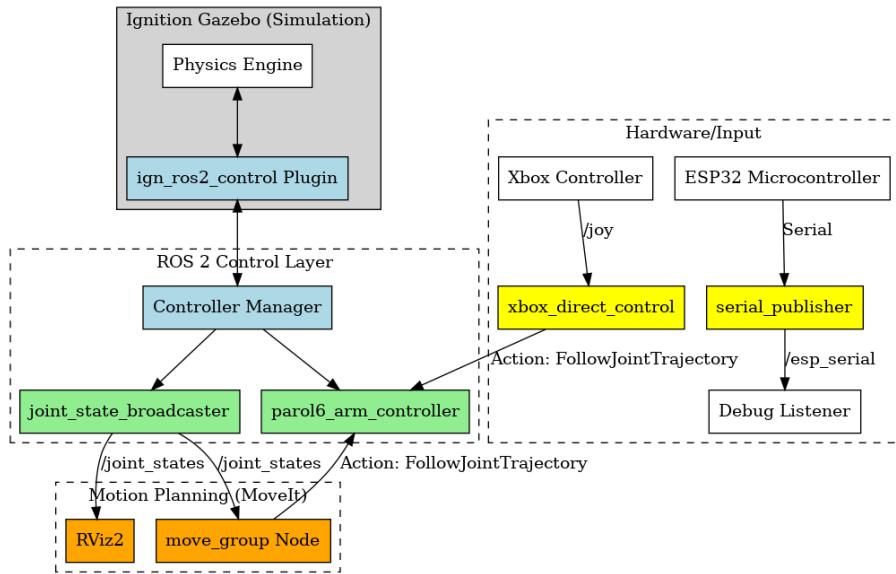


Figure 1: Connection Diagram

C. Key Packages & Configs

1. **parol6 (The Description):**
 - **urdf/PAROL6.urdf:** Defines the physical link and **joint** structure.
 - **Important:** Contains the `<ros2_control>` tag which loads the `ign_ros2_control/IgnitionSystem` plugin. This is the *critical link* between URDF and Ignition.
 - **config/ros2_controllers.yaml:** Defines names and types of controllers (`joint_trajectory_controller/JointTrajectoryController`).
2. **parol6_moveit_config (The Brain):**

- **config/parol6.srdf**: Defines the “planning group” (`parol6_arm`) containing joints L1-L6.
- **config/moveit_controllers.yaml**: Tells MoveIt *how* to talk to the controllers defined in the `parol6` package. It maps the `parol6_arm` group to the `parol6_arm_controller` action namespace.

7. Topic & Network Analysis

A. Network Visualization (RQT Graph Style)

This diagram accurately represents the active ROS 2 node graph during simulation.

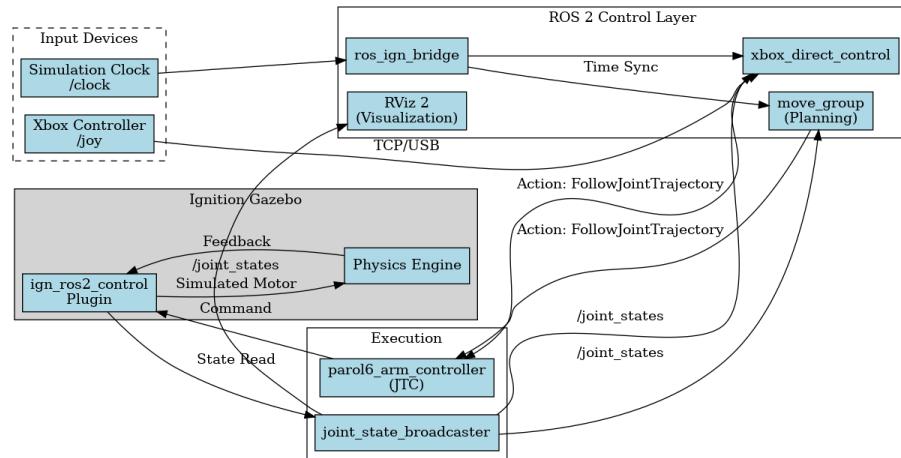


Figure 2: System Architecture Visual

B. System Topic Table

A complete list of active topics, their types, and connected nodes.

Topic Name	Message Type	Publishers	Subscribers	Description
/joy	sensor_msgs/Joy	joy_node	xbox_direct_control	Data from Gamepad. button/axis
/joint_states	sensor_msgs/JointState	joint_state_broadcaster, robot_state_publisher	rviz2, xbox_direct_control, joint_state_broadcaster	Real-time angles of joints L1-L6.

Topic Name	Type	Message Publishers	Subscribers	Description
/robot_descriptions	std_msgs/String	bot_state_publisher, rviz2		The XML URDF string (Static).
/tf	tf2_msgs/TFMessage	bot_state_publisher, rviz2		Dynamic transforms (Moving links).
/tf_static	tf2_msgs/TFMessage	bot_state_publisher, rviz2		Static transforms (Fixed base).
/clock	rosgraph_msgs/Clock	bridgeAll Nodes	(use_sim_time=True)	Simulation sync.
/parol6_arm_controller/followJointTrajectoryAction/goal_controller	controller_manager/FollowJointTrajectoryAction	xbox_direct_control		command target for the robot.
/monitored_planning_scene	PlanningScene	rviz2		The 3D world representation (obstacles + robot).
/move_group/display_plans	DisplayTrajectory	rviz2		The “Ghost” robot trail you see in RViz.
/esp_serial	std_msgs/String	serial_publisher (Debug Tools)		(ESP32-main branch only) Raw serial debug data.

C. Key Services & Actions

Service/Action	Type	Server	Client	Purpose
/compute_ik	GetPositionIK	move_group	External / RViz	Calculate joint angles from XYZ pose.
/plan_kinematic_constraints	GetMotionPlan	move_group	External	Calculate collision-free path.

Service/Action	Type	Server	Client	Purpose
/parol6_arm_controller/following_group/move_group	action	move_group	xbox_direct_control	The “Move” command.

8. Component Responsibility Reference

A. Nodes Reference Table

Node Name	Package	Type	Responsibility
xbox_direct_controller	custom	Python Node	Reads /joy and calculates position commands for the arm (Teleop).
move_group	moveit_ros_move_group	C++ Node	Central MoveIt planner; handles collisions, kinematics (IK), and path planning.
rviz2	rviz2	C++ GUI	Visualization interface for the user and MoveIt interaction.
ros_ign_bridge	ros_ign_bridge	C++ Bridge	Transfers messages (Clock, TF, Cmd) between ROS 2 and Ignition Gazebo.
spawner	controller_manager	Python Script	Loads and configures ros2_control controllers into the manager.
robot_state_publisher	robot_state_publisher	C++ Node	Publishes static and dynamic TFs based on URDF and joint states.

Node Name	Package	Type	Responsibility
<code>serial_publisher</code>	<code>serial_publisher</code>	Python Node	(ESP32 Branch) Reads raw serial data from microcontroller for debugging.

B. Packages Reference Table

Package Name	Location in Repo	Type	Description
<code>parol6</code>	<code>/PAROL6</code>	CMake	Core Description. Contains URDF, Meshes (<code>/meshes</code>), and Gazebo Launch files (<code>/launch</code>).
<code>parol6_moveit_config</code>	<code>/parol6_moveit_config</code>	CMake	MoveIt Config. Generated SRDF, kinematics.yaml, and MoveIt launch files.
<code>serial_publisher</code>	<code>ros2_ws/src/...</code>	Python	ESP32 Bridge. Handles serial communication in the ESP32-main branch.
<code>microros_espifdf</code>	<code>/microros_esp32</code>	ESP-IDF	Firmware. Micro-ROS agent component for the ESP32 (Main Branch).

C. Topic Responsibility Matrix

This table categorizes topics by which subsystem “owns” or produces them, and who consumes them.

Subsystem & Responsibility	Topic Name	Message Type	Consumed By (Subscribers)
IGNITION GAZEBO (Simulation)			
<i>Publishes Sim Time</i>	/clock	rosgraph_msgs/Clock	All Nodes (Sync)
<i>Publishes Ground Truth</i>	/model/parol6/pose	geometry_msgs/Pose	ign_bridge
ROS 2 CONTROL (Hardware Interface)			
<i>Motor Feedback</i>	/joint_states	sensor_msgs/JointState	group, rviz2, xbox_direct_control
<i>Dynamic Transforms</i>	/tf	tf2_msgs/TFMessage	move_group, rviz2
MOVEIT 2 (Motion Planning)			
<i>Visualizing Plans</i>	/move_group/display_plans	display_trajectory	
<i>Scene Awareness</i>	/monitored_planning_scene	msgs/PlanningScene	
INPUT / BRIDGE (User Commands)			
<i>GamePad Input</i>	/joy	sensor_msgs/Joy	xbox_direct_control
<i>Command Target</i>	/parol6_arm_controller	FollowJointTrajectoryAction	TrajectoryController

D. Services & Actions Responsibility Matrix

Subsystem & Responsibility	Name	Type	Called By (Clients)
MOVEIT 2 (Planning)			
<i>Inverse Kinematics</i>	/compute_ik	GetPositionIK	External Nodes, RViz
<i>Path Planning</i>	/plan_kinematic_path	GetMotionPlan	External Nodes
<i>Execute Plan</i>	/move_group	MoveGroupAction	RViz, External Scripts
ROS 2 CONTROL (Execution)			

Subsystem & Responsibility	Name	Type	Called By (Clients)
<i>Execute Trajectory</i>	/parol6_arm_controller	FollowJointTrajectoryAction	xbox_direct_control
<i>Manage Controllers</i>	/controller_manager	list_controller_spawner	
<i>Manage Controllers</i>	/controller_manager	list_controller_spawner	

9. Major Component Interaction Guide

This table provides a “Standard Usage” guide for the primary system components, explaining how they are intended to be used logically.

Component	Role	Key Inputs (Subscribes)	Key Outputs (Publishes)	How to Interact (Standard Usage)
MoveIt 2 (move_group)	Planner. Calculates collision-free paths.	/joint_states, /tf, /robot_description	/move_group/diagram	For MoveGroup API. Do NOT publish to topics directly; use MoveGroup API.
ROS 2 Control (parol6_arm_controller)	Executor. Interpolates (Action) drives motors.	/parol6_arm_controller/joint_trajectory	/joint_trajectory/goal (via broadcaster)	To Send trajectory/goal Motion: Send a FollowJointTrajectory Action Goal. To Read Motion: Subscribe to /joint_states.

Component	Role	Key Inputs (Subscribes)	Key Outputs (Publishes)	How to Interact (Standard Usage)
Ignition Gazebo (<code>ros_ign_bridge</code>)	Hardware. Simulates physics and motors.	/model/parol6// control (if using <code>Twist</code>), Control Commands (internal plugin)	/model/parol6/ pose /model/parol6/ pose	Standard: interact directly. Use ROS 2 Control (above). Debug: You can subscribe to /model/parol6/pose for ground truth, but use /joint_states for control loops.
Xbox Control (<code>xbox_direct_controller</code>)	Teleop. Human-in-control.	/joy, /joint_states	/parol6_arm_controller/follow_joint_trajectory/goal	Usage: Press buttons on controller. Logic: It bypasses MoveIt and talks directly to the Controller for low-latency response.
RViz 2	Visualizer. Shows what the robot thinks.	/tf, /robot_descriptions /move_group/display_planned_paths	(Interactive Markers)	Usage: Use “MotionPlanning” plugin to drag the end-effector and visualize plans before executing.

10. Common Developer Workflows

A. How to Insert the Microcontroller (Micro-ROS Layer)

To transition from Simulation to Real Hardware, you replace the **Ignition/Bridge** layer with the **Micro-ROS Layer**. 1. **The Concept:** The ESP32 acts as a “Hardware Bridge”. It must run a Micro-ROS node that talks to the PC via USB Serial (UART) or Wi-Fi (UDP). 2. **Data Flow:** * **PC -> ESP32:** The ESP32 subscribes to `/parol6_arm_controller/follow_joint_trajectory` (or an intermediate topic like `/joint_commands`). It receives trajectory points (Position/Velocity) and drives the stepper motors. * **ESP32 -> PC:** The ESP32 publishes to `/joint_states`. It reads encoders/steps and sends back the *real* angles [L1...L6] so MoveIt knows where the robot is. 3. **Implementation:** * Use the `microros_esp32` component (verified in `microros_esp3df` branch). * Run the **Micro-ROS Agent** on the PC (inside Docker): `bash ros2 run micro_ros_agent micro_ros_agent serial --dev /dev/ttyUSB0 --baudrate 115200` * Flash the ESP32 to connect to this agent.

B. How to Tune PID Controllers

If the robot wobbles or reacts too slowly in simulation: 1. **Edit:** `PAROL6/config/ros2_controllers.yaml`. * Look for `gains`: under `parol6_arm_controller`. * Adjust p (Proportional) for stiffness, d (Derivative) for damping. 2. **Apply:** * Stop the simulation (`Ctrl+C` or `stop.sh`). * Rebuild: `colcon build`. * Restart: `./start_ignition.sh`.

C. How to Add a Sensor (e.g., Camera)

1. **Model It:** Add a `<link>` (camera body) and `<joint>` (mount) to `PAROL6/urdf/PAROL6.urdf`.
2. **Simulate It:** Add a `<sensor>` tag inside a `<gazebo>` plugin block in the URDF. Use `type="camera"` or `type="depth"`.
3. **Bridge It:** Update `PAROL6/launch/ignition.launch.py` to bridge the new sensor topic (e.g., `/camera/image_raw`) from Ignition to ROS 2.

D. Alternative: Direct Serial Bridge (Any MCU / No Micro-ROS)

If you cannot use Micro-ROS (e.g., using Arduino Uno/Nano, or prefer simpler code), you can use a **Custom Serial Bridge**. 1. **Architecture:** [ROS 2 Node] <---> [USB Serial] <---> [MCU Firmware] 2. **The ROS 2 Node (Python):** * **Input:** Subscribes to `/joint_states` (or your custom command topic). * **Logic:** Converts the list of 6 floats into a formatted string (e.g., `<J1,J2,J3,J4,J5,J6>`). * **Output:** Writes this string to `/dev/ttyUSB0` using the `pyserial` library. * **Feedback:** Reads lines from Serial and publishes them back to ROS (e.g., `/real_joint_states`). * **Reference:** The `serial_publisher` node in the `ESP32-main` branch is a basic example of the “Reader” part of this bridge. 3. **The Firmware (C++):** * Standard `void loop()` that listens for

Serial data. * Parses the string <...> and runs `stepper.moveTo()`. * **Pros:** Works on *any* board, easier to debug with Serial Monitor. * **Cons:** No guaranteed timing (latency), you must invent your own data protocol.

12. Camera Integration (Xbox Kinect V2)

Based on the `xbox_camera` branch and standard ROS 2 perception workflows.

A. Driver Stack

The Kinect V2 is not plug-and-play; it requires a specific userspace driver and a bridge node. 1. `libfreenect2`: The core driver. It communicates directly with the USB 3.0 controller to fetch raw RGB and Depth packets. * *Installation*: Handled by `scripts/install_kinect.sh`. 2. `kinect2_bridge` (or `kinect_ros2`): The ROS 2 Node. It links against `libfreenect2` and publishes standard ROS messages.

B. Key Topics

Topic Name	Message Type	Purpose	Consumers
<code>/kinect2/qhd/imagesensor_msgs/Image</code>	ImageRaw	RGB video stream (960x540).	Computer Vision (YOLO, OpenCV), RViz
<code>/kinect2/qhd/imagesensor_msgs/DepthImage</code>	ImageRectified	depth map (mm distance).	Navigation, 3D Reconstruction
<code>/kinect2/qhd/pointsensor_msgs/PointCloud</code>	PointCloud	(XYZRGB).	MoveIt 2 (Octomap), RViz
<code>/kinect2/camera_infosensor_msgs/CameraCalibration</code>	CameraCalibration	intrinsics (K matrix).	Image Proc, Rectification Nodes

C. MoveIt 2 Integration (Perception)

To allow the robot to “see” and avoid obstacles dynamically: 1. **Update Config**: Edit `parol6_moveit_config/config/sensors_3d.yaml`. 2. **Add Sensor**:
`yaml
 sensors:
 - sensor_plugin: occupancy_map_monitor/PointCloudOctomapUpdater
 point_cloud_topic: /kinect2/qhd/points
 max_range: 2.0` 3. **Result**: MoveIt will consume the PointCloud and build a dynamic **Octomap** (represented as voxels) in the planning scene, preventing the arm from hitting objects seen by the Kinect.

D. Common Approaches for Vision Tasks

1. **Object Detection**: Subscribe to `/kinect2/qhd/image_color`. Use a separate node (e.g., `yolov8_ros`) to find bounding boxes like “Cup”.

2. Grasping:

- Take the center pixel (u,v) of the bounding box.
- Look up the depth (d) at (u,v) in `/kinect2/qhd/image_depth_rect`.
- Deproject (u,v,d) using `/kinect2/camera_info` to get 3D coordinates (X,Y,Z).
- Send this (X,Y,Z) to MoveIt as a target pose.

13. Troubleshooting & Optimization

A. GPU Acceleration & Docker

The `start_ignition.sh` script is configured for **Direct Rendering (DRI)**, which works for most Intel/AMD/NVIDIA setups on Linux. * **The Check:** Inside the container (or outside), run `glxinfo | grep "OpenGL renderer"`. You should see your actual GPU (e.g., “NVIDIA GeForce...”), not “llvmpipe” (software rendering). * **NVIDIA Specifics:** If `glxinfo` fails or simulation is slow on NVIDIA: 1. Install **NVIDIA Container Toolkit** on your host machine: `sudo apt install nvidia-container-toolkit`. 2. Edit `start_ignition.sh`: Change `--device /dev/dri` to `--gpus all`. 3. Restart.

B. Micro-ROS Connection Issues

If the Agent says “Waiting for agent...” or doesn’t connect: 1. **Permissions:** Ensure your user owns the port: `sudo chmod 666 /dev/ttyUSB0`. 2. **Reset Sequence:** * Start the Agent on PC *first*. * Press the **EN (Reset)** button on the ESP32. * Watch for “Session Established” logs. 3. **Baud Rate:** Ensure the baud rate in the C++ firmware (`rmw_uros_set_custom_transport`) matches the agent command (default 115200).

C. X11 / GUI Not Opening

If `start_ignition.sh` fails with “Can’t open display”: 1. **Unlock X11:** Run `xhost +local:docker` on your host machine. 2. **Check Display:** Ensure `echo $DISPLAY` returns something like `:0` or `:1`.

14. Daily Operation Cheat Sheet (TL;DR)

Copy and paste these commands.

Task	Command / Action
Start Everything	<code>./start_ignition.sh</code> (Wait for Gazebo) -> New Terminal -> <code>./add_moveit.sh</code>
Stop Everything	<code>Ctrl+C</code> in all terminals -> <code>./stop.sh</code>

Task	Command / Action
Reset Simulation	Press Orange “Reset” Button in Ignition GUI (bottom left).
Record Data	<code>ros2 bag record -o my_data /joint_states /kinect2/qhd/image_color /kinect2/qhd/points</code>
Play Data	<code>ros2 bag play my_data</code>
List Topics	<code>ros2 topic list</code>
Echo Topic	<code>ros2 topic echo /joint_states</code> (Ctrl+C to stop)
View Graph	<code>rqt_graph</code>

15. Extensibility Guide

A. How to Add a Gripper

1. **URDF:** Edit PAROL6/urdf/PAROL6.urdf. Add a `<joint>` connecting `link_6` to your gripper base.
2. **SRDF:** Edit parol6_moveit_config/config/parol6.srdf. Add a new `<group name="gripper">` and define its joints/links.
3. **Controllers:** Update PAROL6/config/ros2_controllers.yaml. Add a `gripper_controller` (type: `PositionJointInterface`).
4. **MoveIt Controllers:** Update parol6_moveit_config/config/moveit_controllers.yaml. Add `gripper_controller` to the list.
5. **Rebuild:** Run `colcon build` inside the container.

B. How to Change Motors / Gear Ratios

1. **Limits:** Edit PAROL6/urdf/PAROL6.urdf. Find the `<joint>` tags.
 - Update `velocity="..."` (Max rad/s).
 - Update `effort="..."` (Max Nm).
2. **Transmissions:** If using `ros2_control` hardware interface, update the `mechanicalReduction` in the `<transmission>` block (if implemented) or adjust the steps/rad ratio in your microcontroller firmware.

16. Maintenance & Deployment

A. Exporting Your Work (Docker)

To share your exact setup with a colleague who doesn't want to rebuild:

1. **Commit:** `docker commit parol6_dev parol6-export:v1`
2. **Save:** `docker save parol6-export:v1 | gzip > parol6_v1.tar.gz`
3. **Load (Colleague):** `docker load < parol6_v1.tar.gz`

B. Adding New Packages

If you need a new ROS package (e.g., `ros-humble-yolo`): 1. **Try Online:** Enter container, run `sudo apt install ros-humble-yolo`. 2. **Make Permanent:** Add the line `RUN apt-get install -y ros-humble-yolo` to your Dockerfile. All future builds will have it.