

SPACE DEBRIS SYMPOSIUM (A6)

Political, legal, Institutional and Economic Aspects of Space Debris Mitigation and Removal (8)

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POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES OF SPACE DEBRIS MITIGATION AND
REMOVAL**Abstract**

Protecting the space environment is a major concern for Europe when conducting its space activities. The European Space Agency (ESA), together with national space agencies in Europe, has been at the forefront of the efforts undertaken to ensure the sustainability of space activities. To go further in tackling all the environmental challenges that space activities have to face both in space and on Earth, ESA has recently launched the Cleanspace initiative. Part of this effort is dedicated to the development of technologies for space debris mitigation and removal. In this context, a number of political, institutional, legal and economic issues arise that could potentially hinder the development of these new capabilities. In order to create favourable conditions to the advancement of debris mitigation and removal, these non-technical matters have to be taken into account from the beginning of the technical work and addressed in parallel with it. Many of the political and institutional challenges actually stem from the dual-use nature of the debris mitigation and removal technologies, with a strong impact in particular on international cooperation in this domain. The present paper investigates the main political and institutional challenges associated to debris mitigation and removal, with a special emphasis on the security dimension, and analyses the different elements of a framework that would foster the development of such capabilities and would enable future debris removal operations.