

52nd COLLOQUIUM ON THE LAW OF OUTER SPACE (E8)
Peace in Space: Transparency and Confidence Building Measures (2)

Author: Dr. Sylvia Ospina
S. Ospina & Associates - Consultants, United States, sospina2@gmail.com

LET THERE BE PEACE IN SPACE, AND ON EARTH

Abstract

The use of outer space for peaceful purposes is a principle enshrined in the 1967 Outer Space Treaty; it is the “raison d’être” of the United Nations’ Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). Since the space age began in the 1950s, there has not been any “star wars”, or acts of aggression, such as one Administration’s intentional destruction of a spacecraft belonging to a different Administration. However, the intentional destruction of a satellite by its own Administration has occurred, as well as the accidental collision and destruction of satellites or satellite components, the most recent one occurring in February 2009.

Whether intentional or accidental, the destruction of spacecraft has added to the ever-increasing amount of space debris, creating hazards for all satellites, for space flights to the International Space Station, and for repairs to the Hubble Telescope. It could be that future collisions will no longer be considered merely accidental, but will attributed to the bad faith of some Administration, resulting in retaliation and further conflict, on Earth, and even in Space.

Are international agreements, such as the space treaties, sufficient to avoid or minimize the risk of a “star wars” and increase confidence in man’s ability to explore and use space for peaceful purposes? What additional measures can be taken by the international community, to ensure that the use of outer space does indeed remain for peaceful purposes?