

52nd COLLOQUIUM ON THE LAW OF OUTER SPACE (E8)

Legal challenges to Earth observation programs with particular emphasis on developing countries (5)

Author: Prof. Jairo Andres Becerra Ortiz
Universidad Catolica de Colombia - CISJUC, Colombia

A LEGAL STRATEGY FOR THE APPLICATION OF EARTH OBSERVATION PROGRAMS IN THE
COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA.

Abstract

This paper analyses the factors that may impede the development of coordinated earth observation programs in the countries of Central and South America and advocates the creation of a legal strategy which can open the way for bilateral, multilateral and regional agreements on the subject.

With the exception of Brazil, the development and application of space technology in Latin America has been slow and has not reflected the capacity of the countries in the region. As a result, the benefits have not been felt by the average citizen. Among the main factors hindering the development of earth observation programs are the limited financial resources, the almost total lack of implementation of regional agreements, the insufficient regulation of space observation of the national territory at country level, and the lack of legislation concerning public and private programs and their commercial exploitation. eg. It is argued that the money spent on the preparatory meetings to discuss budgets, logistics, strategy and sponsorship for the construction of the communications satellite in the Andean Region in the 1980s and 1990s would have been enough to set up a stable earth observation program in the region. (This project was never implemented)

We propose a legal strategy that covers these programs and allows their execution in an efficient, productive manner. Laws should be a means to an end, and not an end in themselves. Finally, the creation of stable channels of cooperation between Latin American countries is vital to the development of more ambitious programs for earth observation in the region.