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The Current Status of the Rule of Law with Regard to Space Activities (4)

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SHOULD THERE BE AN ENVIRONMENTAL “CODE OF CONDUCT” FOR ACTIVITIES IN OUTER
SPACE?

Abstract

The corpus juris spatialis provides that states shall avoid harmful contamination of natural environments in the exploration and use of outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies. COSPAR has developed a planetary protection policy directed to issues of potential biological contamination, and the IADC has adopted guidelines to limit the creation of orbital debris. These forms of regulation are very limited, and as concluded by the IAA Cosmic Study “Protecting the Environment of Celestial Bodies,” significant gaps exist in the regime for the preservation of the natural environments of space. However, the ability to preserve environmental integrity can be directly related to technological competence, as well as political resolve. This paper will review the current status of measures to protect the outer space environments, and examine whether an environmental ‘code of conduct’ should be established to supplement treaty obligations consistent with scientific purposes and technological capabilities.