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OPENING UP THE ISS TO THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY – A KEY TO PROMOTING
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Abstract

With the probable extension of the life time of the International Space Station (ISS) to at least 2020, new ideas for its utilization are being discussed. While the “international” in the name International Space Station is a reference to the International Partners (IP) - US, Russia, Europe, Japan, and Canada - who operate the ISS as a joint project and all sent astronauts to the ISS, access to the ISS for other nations is very limited. Currently only three astronauts from non-IP nationals have been to the ISS: Brazil as bilateral partner of the US, and Malaysia and South Korea through commercial agreements with Russia.

This paper will outline the benefits and challenges related to encouraging and allowing astronauts from emerging or aspiring space faring nations to fly to and utilize the ISS as well as integrating them into the mission can act as a tool for international cooperation and at the same time as a boost to promote and develop space science and technology in their countries of origin.

The Soviet Interkosmos program that brought cosmonauts from around a dozen nations into space between 1978 and 1988 could serve as an example for such an endeavor and will be discussed along with potential problems such as the “gap” in access to the ISS, legal aspects and cost. Clarifying the existing open issues would lead to a win-win scenario for the International Partners and the participating countries alike while extending the utilization of the ISS into the future.