

53rd COLLOQUIUM ON THE LAW OF OUTER SPACE (E7)
The Current Status of the Rule of Law with Regard to Space Activities (4)

Author: Mr. E. Jason Steptoe
National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), United States, jay.steptoe@nasa.gov

LEGAL STATUS OF TECHNICAL GUIDELINES AND FRAMEWORKS FOR OUTER SPACE
ACTIVITIES

Abstract

In recent years, governmental technical experts have jointly developed non-binding guidelines to mitigate the proliferation of orbital debris and a safety framework for protecting people and the environment in Earth's biosphere from potential hazards associated with space applications using nuclear power sources. These documents provide voluntary guidance for the development of national and, perhaps later, international intergovernmental requirements, while allowing for flexibility in adapting such technical guidance within municipal regulatory systems for authorizing and supervising national activities in space. By their express terms, the documents are not intended to create legally binding obligations under international law. However, they make highly important contributions to international efforts to promote orderly and transparent exploration and use of outer space by governmental and non-governmental entities.

The paper will discuss the purpose and scope of technical and programmatic guidance of this nature and the status of such documents in the context of international treaties and principles promulgated by the United Nations' Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.