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Author: Dr. Ulrike M. Bohlmann
ESA, France

CONNECTING THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW TO SPACE
ACTIVITIES

Abstract

As the awareness of the fragility of the Earth's environment and the exhaustibility of its resources increases around the globe, unavoidably also questions concerning the impact of space activities on that terrestrial environment and in a further step on the impact of our human activities on the outer space environment arise.

The legal appreciation of these environmental impacts of space activities needs to combine a number of different view points that will also necessitate a closer look at the legal mechanics of a possible connection of the principles of international environmental law with space activities.

This paper will approach the question under three different angles:

- the direct relevance of general environmental law, such as the 1972 Stockholm Declaration, the 1992 Rio Declaration and the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity to space activities will be examined;
- the interpretation of the basic public international space law provisions, starting from the general sedes materiae Article 9 of the Outer Space Treaty, in the light of the developing international environmental law context will be discussed and
- the current development concerning specific instruments for specific aspects of space activities, their legal qualification and implementation by national regulations and governmental and space agencies' policies will be described and analysed. Mention needs to be made in this context of the 2009 UN Safety Framework for Nuclear Power Source Applications in Outer Space, the 2007 UN Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines and the 2002 (amended lastly 2008) COSPAR Planetary Protection Policy.

Connecting these different approaches and putting the respective developments into perspective will allow discerning the evolution in the focus of the international law-makers with regard to the environmental impact of the exploration and use of outer space. A concluding chapter will try to highlight possible underlying ethical considerations and also provide some considerations concerning possible future developments.