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NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IMPORTANCE AND FUTURE ROLE IN SPACE
EXPLORATION

Abstract

Space Exploration is a complex and long-lasting undertaking for all humankind. The definition and implementation of Space Exploration missions has been international so far and it is expected to become really global in the future when complex human exploration beyond Earth Orbits will take place. Space Exploration needs to be sustainable and as such should be supported by a constituency as wide as possible, at global level, beyond Space Agencies. Exploration programs will offer new market opportunities to the involvement of many industries especially of small and medium size by consolidating technology frontiers opened by the governments or opening new ones. This however requires stimulation of the industrial landscape to produce new start-ups. So far the implementation of complex exploration missions is carried out generally by Space Agencies, but Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) like the International Academy of Astronautics (IAA), AIAA, National Space Society, Mars Society, etc. have played and can play an even more important role in the future of Space Exploration, especially if coordinated. This coordination can increase the impact of appealing directly to the ultimate constituency financing, via public or private funds, Exploration programs, that is the public at large. The public can then influence the political representatives and the government priorities as direct consequence. NGOs not directly related to Space Exploration (ie. Environmental groups) have already acquired large impact on the public policy, and Space Exploration NGOs should also explore possibilities to be associated to them, increasing their effectiveness on the public. The paper will first carry out a mapping of the existing NGOs operating in the field of Space Exploration and their associated activities as well as of some, non-space NGOs, that could have interest in Space Exploration. The paper will then assess the role played so far by these organizations and will make proposals on how to coordinate their operations, in full synergy with Space Agencies and Private Companies, to increase the public awareness, at global level, of the importance of Space Exploration. The ultimate goal shall be to obtain higher priorities in the governments for space exploration programs as well as to foster investment by the private sector and new industrial start-ups.