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Regional cooperation in space: policies, governance and legal tools (1)

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REGIONAL EFFORTS TO ADVANCE SPACE SUSTAINABILITY: SPOTLIGHT ON LATIN
AMERICA

Abstract

The long-term sustainability (LTS) guidelines effort underway in the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) is one of several international initiatives to broaden norms of responsible space behavior. Recent research and activity within the Committee has shed light on the salience of regional dynamics in space sustainability approaches. These point to the benefit of regional, as well as bilateral, engagement in the development of space sustainability mechanisms, whose adoption could be incorporated into new or existing cooperation mechanisms at the regional level.

With significant momentum in the expansion of government, industry, and academic space activities in the region, Latin America (Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean) presents a case study of how regional dynamics can shape attitudes towards space sustainability and its role in activities under development. This paper will build on past research to identify common themes, existing or planned activities, and related issues by drawing on the findings of an upcoming workshop being implemented by the Secure World Foundation and its partners in April 2015. The “Regional Workshop on the Long-term Sustainability of Space Activities” will engage space policy experts from each of the COPUOS members of the Group on Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC). Participants have been asked to present on the relevant space achievements of their countries, and to engage in active discussions about the LTS effort, other relevant international and regional sustainability activities, and opportunities for collaboration in this area. These discussions may help define ways to promote both national and regional implementation given that several regional actors are in the process of establishing institutions and developing space-related policy and regulation.

In addition to reporting on the findings of this workshop, this paper will also draw from literature review of articles, official documents, presentations, and available transcripts of events relevant to the subject to suggest areas of future work in this area, particularly as space sustainability efforts reach critical decision points. By emphasizing the value of building on common concerns and priorities, this analysis may point to opportunities for addressing space sustainability from a common regional focus that could be relevant to cooperative efforts in other regions of the world.