

59th IISL COLLOQUIUM ON THE LAW OF OUTER SPACE (E7)  
Contemporary Considerations about the 1986 Principles Relating to Remote Sensing of the Earth from  
Space (3)

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CONTEMPORARY CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE 1986 UN PRINCIPLES RELATING TO  
REMOTE SENSING OF THE EARTH FROM SPACE

**Abstract**

Global discourse after 1991 was focused on the strategic value of utilizing space systems to obtain remote sensing (RS) data for national security. Three decades later, RS data has become, for governments, an invaluable tool for structuring sustainable development programmes. More importantly, developments in technology and business operations have made higher resolution RS products, without the earlier perceived security/civilian distinction, globally and commercially available to government and private users alike.

In view of the aforesaid, this paper will evaluate the impact of remote sensing data services on the current ecosystem in context of the 1986 UN Principles for the purpose of the proposed international legal regime on remote sensing. The paper will analyse several important questions, including (i) how commercial remote sensing data services have impacted 'sensed stated' ?; (ii) whether the globally available higher RS data products aggravate national security challenges in the 21st century?; (iii) how should states reconcile rights and obligations specified in the 1986 Principles for the achievement of competing global objectives, including disaster management; climate change challenges; humanitarian assistance; non-proliferation; terrorism and global security, which necessarily postulates sharing remote sensing data. The paper will identify opportunities and challenges relevant to the current ecosystem and make some suggestions for a possible way forward.