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Contemporary Considerations about the 1986 Principles Relating to Remote Sensing of the Earth from Space (3)

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MIGRATION FLOWS IN THE EU AND REMOTE SENSING

Abstract

Over the first two months of 2015, the number of refugees in Europe increased by approximately 43. These new migration flows mainly consist of refugees or people in need of international protection: women, children, and men from war-torn countries, such as Syria, Iraq, Eritrea, Sub-Saharan Africa and Libya. They flee conflicts, persecution and – of course – extreme poverty, and must therefore be welcomed, under the Geneva Convention and the Dublin Regulation. The Dublin III Regulation (No. 604/2013) is a European Union law that determines the EU Member State responsible for examining an application for asylum or refugee status under the Geneva Convention, which is usually the State through which the asylum seeker first entered the EU. Several EU countries are involved: first reception countries, such as Italy and Greece for what concerns Mediterranean migration, and other countries that grant asylum, such as Germany, followed by the UK, France, Italy and Spain. Monitoring migration flows is the most pressing issue, especially in first reception countries. A possible solution could be remote sensing of borders in migrant countries of origin, carried out by companies from destination countries. An example is the Treaty signed between Libya and Italy in 2008. A costly mechanism that, however, does not involve the use of police forces. The cost will be split between the destination country and the EU, based on existing agreements. Satellite monitoring could help save lives, enhance safety operations, counteract illegal migration, and prevent terrorists from entering the EU. All rescue and recovery operations now rely on satellite technology, and information on piracy and border control is provided in real time. Data is processed in Lisbon at the European Maritime Safety Agency, and all vessel traffic in European waters is traced by EMSA. Since the phenomenon involves Europe as a whole, and considering existing EU-ESA joint space initiatives, it would be advisable to entrust the European Space Agency with the tasks of satellite monitoring and remote sensing. The Sentinel-3 satellite – carrying sophisticated radar and optical instruments and currently used for the Copernicus environmental and security monitoring program – could also be used to locate and identify migrant vessels.