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COSPAR RECOMMENDATIONS IN A NEW CONTEXT? ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OF SPACE
MINING

Abstract

The projects on space mining open numerous questions, including the one on the guarantees of environmental standards of space activities. These are in a general way regulated by Article IX of the Outer Space Treaty (due regard to the corresponding interests of other Parties, avoidance of adverse changes in the environment of the Earth resulting from introduction of extraterrestrial matter, obligation to undertake international consultations). The specific regulations for avoiding interplanetary contamination are developed and regularly amended by the international Committee on Space Research (COSPAR). The contribution analyses the scope of the competences of COSPAR, the legal character of its recommendations, and their applicability to space mining. Special attention is given to the question of the scale of space activities covered by the COSPAR recommendations (e.g. samples return), and the envisaged scale of space mining. In the conclusion, the contribution attempts to answer the question whether the COSPAR recommendations could have influence on space mining, and to which extent.