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

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SPACE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Abstract

The approval of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the UN General Assembly in 2015 is a departure point for a new theoretical approach to international development, with an emphasis on holistic solutions that consider long-term economic, social and environmental requirements of beneficiaries. Multi-stakeholder, cross-cutting approaches will be particularly important to the achievement of these goals. This paper discusses the innovative aspects of the 2030 Agenda that make the involvement of space in the development process timely and relevant. It maps existing areas of interaction between space and development onto the SDGs, looking at areas where space might make a significant contribution, but where its potential has been underused. In analysing the means by which a dialogue between space stakeholders and development actors might be put in place, it underlines the importance that the requirements for space solutions to come from development implementers such as the UN, government actors, and EU and other institutions, and particularly stakeholders and NGOs in the field. The paper therefore maps relevant “Demand Side” actors, and surveys how the SDGs will be managed and monitored in their context. On the “Supply Side”, a main difficulty is the diffuse range of actors. A key player is the European Union, for whom space is an important element in building unity. Another example of cooperation between space actors is the International Charter on Space and Major Disasters. It has also recently been invoked to address a public health crisis, and there are proposals to expand its mandate to an International Charter on Space and Development, which may provide a path to closer integration between space and development. It is clear that High-Level Forums are a necessary pre-requisite for fostering cooperation within the space sector, while establishing a dialogue with relevant development actors is key to facilitating the uptake of technological solutions. In this exchange, it is important that space acts as an enabler who understands that although space infrastructure may be a component in the solution, space per se may not always be an appropriate tool in the field. This being said, there are a number of successful space-reliant and demand driven initiatives which may provide best practice experiences (e.g. PUMA, AMESD, MESA). Evaluating the best tools and synergies in promoting a dialogue between space and development, this paper concludes by identifying the practical path forward.