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Assuring a Safe, Secure and Sustainable Space Environment for Space Activities (4)

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MULTI LATERAL INITIATIVES FOR LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF OUTER SPACE
ACTIVITIES

Abstract

Space technology and applications are very vital for national needs of every state. Further, the advantage of space technology and applications through space based systems under the broad scope of remote sensing, communication and navigation services prove to be yielding very effective and innovative solutions in everyday life of a common man. 'Freedom of exploration use and free access to all celestial bodies' is assured by Outer Space Treaty to all countries. Today the outer space environment is not very conducive for safety and security of space objects, not because of the fact that the natural environment is very harsh, but due to the human-made situation. The outer space environment is cluttered with innumerable man-made debris of varying sizes, which pose serious threat to the survival and functioning of active space objects. Outer space is congested and contested. Using outer space for military activities in a non-aggressive manner has of late been an accepted practice. Nevertheless, the trend apparently visualizes an arms race in outer space and raises concerns amongst international space community. This scenario emphasizes the need for ensuring unhindered operation of space systems towards ensuring uninterrupted services for the benefit of entire humanity. In a nut shell, it calls for a Common Security in outer space. With this background, it would be attempted in this paper, to deal on the ongoing international initiatives such as – i) Long Term Sustainability of outer Space Activities through a Working Group mode in Sub-Committees of UNCOPUOS, ii) Transparency and Confidence Building Measures as evolved by the Group of Governmental Experts under the auspices of UN General Assembly resolution, iii) International Code of Conduct for outer space activities initiated by European Union and being pursued by EU through multi lateral open ended consultations, and iv) Treaty on Prevention of placement of weapons in outer space (PPWT) jointly proposed by Russia and China in the Conference on Disarmament (CD). Incidentally, except the last one, (PPWT), other initiatives are legally not binding on subscribing states, because they fall under the category of soft law nature. They expect the subscribing states to voluntarily implement the provisions of the Code. With this background, the developments of these multi lateral initiatives and the pros and cons of them would be dealt with.