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NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION COOPERATION WITH LATIN
AMERICA, THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

Abstract

A key theme of this Congress is that “a new era in the use and exploration of space for Mexico and Latin America has initiated.” This paper will discuss ongoing and future cooperation between NASA and countries in Latin America, the Middle East and Africa. It will look at specific cooperation and the legal mechanisms used to implement the cooperation. For example, the United States has Framework Agreements with Argentina and Brazil legally binding under international law. These agreements provide for cooperation in space operations and exploration, earth and space science and other matters under lower-level Implementing Agreements. Additionally, NASA has signed Statements of Intent with several potential key partners, including Kenya, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. These non-legally binding instruments are often helpful to our potential partners as a means of helping them to secure the domestic visibility and resources necessary to initiate and sustain meaningful cooperation with NASA and other international partners. An example of cooperation which does not require legally binding agreements is the airborne campaign involving 11 Central and South American nations, which NASA intends to launch in 2016. This campaign will collect data for scientific investigations of volcanic deformation, soil moisture, hydrology, land use/land cover change, and carbon stocks in forests and mangroves. Another type of cooperation is the NASA “DEVELOP” (Student Partnerships in Earth Science) which involves students travelling to the United States to work on earth science projects. For example, the 2015 project between various US universities and governmental entities and Mexican Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) uses NASA earth observations to monitor and manage ocelot (medium sized wild cats) habitat loss in North Mexico. This paper also will look at the internal United States Government internal processes for coordinating different types of cooperation. For example, international agreements binding under international law are required to go through an interagency approval process, run by the Department of State and coordinated with other parts of the US government (e.g., the National Security Council, the Office of Science and Technology Policy, the Office of Management and Budget). Moreover, the paper will look at certain other partners’ approval processes. For example, some partners are required to obtain final approval from the highest level of their governments prior to committing even limited funding to cooperation with NASA.