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International Cooperation - a cornerstone of 50 years UN Space Law and space diplomacy (1)

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ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN PROMOTING
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN OUTER SPACE: A CASE STUDY OF APSCO AND APRSAF
(COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL MECHANISM OF COOPERATION)

Abstract

Although the genesis of space age resided in the race for national prestige between the erstwhile super powers USA and USSR, the military significance of space gave further impetus to the rapid development of space science and technology. It was not long afterwards that the tremendous benefits of space-based assets for mankind were realized. Concurrently, the huge cost of space exploration forced the leading space-faring nations to be more pragmatic. Competition in outer space soon gave way to cooperation. Unsurprisingly therefore, when the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) was established in 1958, the basic role assigned to UNOOSA was promoting international cooperation. Subsequently, during the development of International Space Law, focus on International cooperation among states was further stressed which is evident from the UN five treaties on outer space. The Outer Space Treaty (which is the most widely accepted treaty, with 104 States parties) accentuates and obligates States to facilitate and encourage international cooperation in scientific investigation in outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies and carry out activities, in the interest of maintaining international peace, security and promoting international cooperation and understanding. More recently, the UNISPACE+50 road-map which is aimed at defining concrete deliverables of Space for the development of nations under the four pillars, includes building partnerships and strengthening international cooperation in space activities (Space Diplomacy) as one of its pillars. The radical restructuring of the international political landscape coupled with the outburst of technological capabilities around the world and a growing realization of the benefits that space technology offers, particularly to the developing nations, there is an ever more greater need for cooperative ventures in exploitation of outer space. There are a variety of space programs that, if developed cooperatively, could benefit all nations, both individually and collectively. The role of inter-governmental organizations is central to such cooperation. International intergovernmental organizations provide an effective mechanism through which resources could be pooled and complex technologies could be developed relatively quickly and cheaply for mutual benefits. This paper provides a case study of Asia Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO) and Asia Pacific Regional Space Agency forum (APRSAF), as mechanisms of formal and informal cooperation in space sector. The paper covers a detailed analysis of their structures, working mechanism, programs and activities. Through a comparative study and investigation, the best practices and effective mechanisms are identified, both through formal and informal structure of cooperation.