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## RECONSTRUCTING COPUOS: THE PRESSING, MISSING DEVELOPMENT IN SPACE LAW

**Abstract**

This paper summarizes the results of a survey among experts on the need to reform COPUOS and the possible nature of such a reform. respondents to the survey include present/ past heads of OOSA, COPUOS and its subcommittees, space law professors, space agencies personnel and government officials from around the globe. Established in 1959 in order “to govern the exploration and use of space” and “study the nature of legal problems which may arise from the exploration of outer space”, COPUOS had, in its first two decades, gave birth to an array of norms-creating UNGA declarations and space law treaties, which constitute space law as we still know it today. The following four decades saw stagnation, with zero new treaties, leaving un-answered even the most pressing challenges, e.g. mining space resources, weaponization of space and space debris. A stagnated system is destined to collapse. Indeed, some states have already resorted to unilateral action and national legislation, a worrying trend of retreat from multilateral arrangements. Chief architect of European unification, Jean Monnet, held that nothing is possible without people and nothing is sustainable without properly constructed institutions. Saving COPUOS – and with it global space governance – requires a reform, if not a reconstruction. With UNISPACE+50 coming in 2018, on the agenda of which are “international mechanisms and frameworks [for] long-term sustainability of outer space activities”, it is time to put on the table first and foremost the issue of a reform in COPUOS. The survey and this paper are part of a comprehensive study on the desired architecture of global space governance. This paper commences by presenting the problem of institutional stagnation of COPUOS, asserting that its causes are structural and the solution should be, likewise, structural. The paper then presents the survey and the respondents and continues to present and review the results of the survey and the conclusions therefrom. The paper concludes that there is a pressing need to reform COPUOS and draws a rough sketch of a possible such reform that will render COPUOS more inclusive on the one hand, and more effective on the other. The paper further makes the case for the establishment of a UN/COPUOS-mandated workgroup on the future structure and roles of COPUOS that will study the ways to ensure its relevance in the next 50 years of space exploration.