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

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LEADING FROM BEHIND: NGO'S AND SPACE POLICY

Abstract

Integrated into the work of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space through that institution's permanent observer system, non-governmental organizations have played an important role in the elaboration of concepts and texts that have ultimately made their way into international decisions impacting space policy. NGOs have also played important roles in multilateral environments outside of the UN system and in the creation of national and even sub-national space policy. Examining specific examples of NGO policy impact this paper will seek to generalize lessons learned and highlight best practices for the benefit of NGOs seeking to advance policy objectives and governments hoping to integrate the insights of NGOs into the policy process. Among the examples to be examined are the Panel on Asteroid Threat Mitigation organized by the Association of Space Explorers and supported by the Secure World Foundation, the Hague Space Resources Governance Working Group, initiated by the Hague Institute of Global Justice and then sustained by a consortium of governmental and non-governmental partners, COSPAR's development of planetary protection policy, and the Open Geospatial Consortium's impact on the policy environment through the development of standards. With the scheduled completion of UNISPACE+50 and the COPUOS Long Term Sustainability of Space Activity processes in June 2018, this paper will seek to incorporate the special role played in them by NGOs seeking to advance a safe, secure and sustainable space environment. It will conclude with some thoughts on the importance of the decision to convert the High Level Forum employed to prepare for UNISPACE+50 into an annual track 1.5 event that can facilitate the input of space policy thinking from NGOs including commercial activities into the international policy process.