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TOWARD NEW INTERNATIONAL STATES' CONDUCT IN REGISTERING SPACE OBJECTS

Abstract

The 1975 Registration Convention (REG) establishes a double mandatory system of registration: either in a national registry in which the way of administration and contents is determined by States concerned, or in the international registry held by the U. N. Secretary General (the UN Register), with information furnished by the State of Registry or the International Intergovernmental Organization that has declared its acceptance of the Convention. While the former is only accessible upon permission of the state of registry, the latter is public, with open access to all international community – becoming, therefore, one of the key factors ensuring transparency, safety and long-term sustainability of space activities. The states not yet party to the REG can send information on the launch of space objects to the UN Secretary General on a voluntary basis, under the recommendation of the United Nations Resolution 1721 B of 1962 establishing the UN Resolution Register. Since the establishment of those two UN Registers, activities in space have dramatically increased and changed in nature, to include a variety of commercial activities with increasing complexity of space operations. Furthermore, the emergence of large constellations, along with the increased risks of collision and interference with the operation of space objects, pose serious risks to the long-term sustainability of space activities, since not all these changes were foreseen in the current registrations systems. To address this problem, the community of states established a working group on this issue through the UN COPUOS Legal Sub-Committee, resulting in the adoption of the 2007 United Nations General Assembly Resolution 62/101 setting forth concrete recommendations on issues aimed to improve and harmonize the registration process, intended to enhance transparency of space activities and to give more reliability to the UN Registers. This paper will investigate the progress being made by states and international intergovernmental organizations in their practice of registering space objects, after this first decade of the adoption of the non-binding “Registration Practice Resolution” as well as its interaction with the on-going Working Group on Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities of the UN COPUOS Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, under its guideline number 6: “Enhance the practice of registering space objects” and the UNISPACE+50 thematic priority 3: “Enhanced information exchange on space objects and events.”