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THE WORK OF THE SMPAG AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON LEGAL ISSUES

Abstract

The ‘Space Mission Planning Advisory Group – SMPAG’ was established upon the recommendation of the Working Group on Near-Earth Objects (NEOs) of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space of 2013. The first formal meeting took place in February 2014 at ESOC in Darmstadt. The primary purpose of SMPAG is to prepare for an international response to a NEO threat through the exchange of information, development of options for collaborative research and mission opportunities, and to conduct NEO threat mitigation planning activities. The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) serves as the permanent secretariat. Membership of SMPAG is mainly open to space agencies, while other space related organizations can become observers.

The ‘SMPAG Ad Hoc Working Group on Legal Issues – SMPAG Legal WG’ was established under the mandate of SMPAG in February 2016 and started its work in November of the same year. The main purpose of the SMPAG Legal WG is to advise SMPAG with regard to legal aspects of near-Earth object (NEO) threat mitigation. The scope of work includes to describing the existing legal context relevant to the work of SMPAG, to identify, formulate and prioritize relevant legal questions and issues requiring clarification with regard to planetary defence and to suggest, where necessary, possible ways forward to deal with legal questions and issues. First findings should be presented to SMPAG before the end of 2018. The presentation will provide a brief overview of the SMPAG Legal WG’s work so far and some preliminary thoughts about the envisaged first findings.