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THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF OUTER SPACE ACTIVITIES: CAPACITY BUILDING IN SPACE LAW AND POLICY FOR SMALL SATELLITE DEVELOPERS

Abstract

In 2011, the United Nations/Japan Fellowship Programme Post-graduate study on Nano-Satellite Technologies (PNST) was launched as part of the Basic Space Technology Initiative (BSTI) under the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, implemented by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA). Since then more than 80 international students have been studying at Kyushu Institute of Technology (Kyutech) under the PNST and Space Engineering International Course (SEIC). Master and PhD degree students receive hands-on training in the design, development, testing and operation of small satellites. Under the Birds satellite constellation project, PNST and SEIC students from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Costa Rica, Ghana and Mongolia will launch their country's first satellite. Based on the success of the United Nations/Japan Fellowship Programme, several other countries have pledged to send students to Kyutech to help build their space programmes. Given the many regulatory and legal obligations of countries for space activities, such as the authorization and supervision of space activities of non-governmental actors, including universities, the need to provide capacity building in space policy and law, tailored to the needs of small satellite developers, was identified. A 2-credit course (16x90 minutes) on "The International Dimension of Space Activities: Space Law and Policy for Small Satellite Developers" was developed and taught to 37 international PNST/SEIC students for the first time in 2017. In this course, the students were exposed to the concepts of space law and policy and to the regulatory and legal framework applicable to small satellite developers. Student assignments included preparing draft texts for national space policies and laws. These exercises proved of practical importance since many of the involved countries do not yet have a space policy or a national space law. The paper discusses the course content and outcome and its vital contributions to assuring a safe, secure and sustainable space environment for space activities, in particular in the context of thematic priority 7 "capacity building for the 21st century" of UNISPACE+50, to be held in 2018.