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THE IMPORTANCE OF AN INTERNATIONAL FUNDING MECHANISM FOR ACTIVE DEBRIS  
REMOVAL IN LEO

**Abstract**

The proliferation of space debris and the imminent deployment of large constellations of satellites in LEO could negatively impact the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. A potential solution to clean up space and maintain a sustainable space environment for the future is Active Debris Removal (ADR). For the private companies, ADR is a potential revenue earning activity, but such activity needs a legal framework that will dissolve the existing concerns. Irrespective of the technical solutions to be developed for the remediation of space debris, it was identified that space law is fundamental both for the safe management of the future space traffic and for supporting a potential business case for commercial ADR missions.

This paper will bring into discussion an international mechanism addressing the financial means for commercial ADR activity with a focus on LEO. By doing so, this paper will address the advent of ADR as lucrative activity and will analyze the proposal to finance an international fund by the launching states and ADR operators in a “Pay or play” fashion.

In particular, this paper will analyze the need of an international funding mechanism for space debris removal and analyze the liability issues affecting the launching state and indirectly the private company with ADR capabilities. This paper aims to answer why private companies should contribute to an international fund for space debris removal depending on the Post-Mission Disposal capabilities of the satellites deployed in orbit and/or ADR solutions identified in case the satellites fail to answer the control commands. Further, this paper will analyze the prospects to manage the activity for ADR by accessing this fund.