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Author: Ms. Krystal Wilson
Secure World Foundation, United States

Ms. Victoria Samson
Secure World Foundation, United States

TOWARDS NORMS OF BEHAVIOR: OUTCOMES OF THE SUMMIT FOR SPACE SUSTAINABILITY

Abstract

The space sector is currently experiencing rapid growth in both the number and diversity of space actors. This change is driven by commoditization and globalization of space technologies, increased public and private investment in space, and growing awareness of the value of space for security and socioeconomic benefits on Earth. The increase in the number of stakeholders benefiting from space systems has exposed the challenges that existing legal, policy, technical, and operational regimes face in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the space environment. Space sustainability has greatly increased in salience as a highly discussed policy topic over the past decade. However, this increased awareness has not always translated into definitive action to address some of the most important issues related to space sustainability. Additionally, the linkages across a variety of space sustainability issues and initiatives are not always clear, even to those focused on this field.

In June 2019, Secure World Foundation hosted the Summit for Space Sustainability, a high-level multi-day event focused on developing solutions for space sustainability. The Summit for Space Sustainability encompassed a cross-section of issue areas, including space debris, space situational awareness, space law and policy, space governance, national and international space security, and the use of space for human and environmental security on Earth. The event worked to explore current trends, highlight complementarities, and promote next steps in these specific areas, bringing in participants from around the globe to garner a wide variety of responses. In addition, there was an invitation-only half-day workshop the day before the Summit whose participants identified norms of behavior that would ensure the responsible use of space.

This paper will discuss the results of the workshop and the Summit, taking care to focus on themes that emerged about priorities for the future continued use of and access to space. It will look at next steps for ways in which the points discussed at the events in June can evolve to usable, helpful policy guidance at the national and international level.