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CHARACTERIZING AND CLASSIFYING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR SPACE
RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT: ACTORS, OBJECTIVES, AND MODELS

Abstract

Space Resources has become a topic of high priority lately, as technology evolves. Matters related not only to technical issues, but also to legal concerns and to how cooperation might be established in the pursuit of space resources development (discovery, exploration and exploitation) in the coming future are at the top of the discussions in several fora worldwide. In an attempt for setting up a starting point for discussion, this paper presents the outcome of analysis work being done under the Socioeconomic Panel of The Hague International Space Resources Governance Working Group to characterize and classify international cooperation (levels, interactions and efforts) for space resources development: actors, objectives and models. The paper begins by discussing the general need for, and current trends in, actor-to-actor international cooperation related to space resources development. It then postulates a five-group structure for characterization and classification of international cooperation based on the commitment (capacity, interest and involvement) of actors to space resources development. It then describes the objectives and models, which might be employed by the actors in that group for cooperation. This group structure, aims to document common objectives and cooperation models, and classify them according to the actors that are most likely to employ them. Such objectives include policy development, scientific capacity enhancement, and enables industry development (among others). Such models include Government-to-Government Framework Agreements, Intergovernmental Agreements, Agency to Agency MOUs, Implementing Arrangements, Letters of Agreement, Letters of Intent etc. The paper concludes by suggesting a standard visualization system for characterization and classification of international cooperation for space resources development. In so doing it aims to support a UNCOPUOS finding that “In order to involve more countries in such international cooperation, there is a need to identify, [...], areas of common interest and to assign priorities for action to explore opportunities among the developers and users of space technologies.”