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Contribution of Moon Village to Solving Global Societal Issues (2)

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A SOCIAL LICENSE TO OPERATE FOR LUNAR RESOURCES ACTIVITIES: TOWARDS A FAIR  
AND SUSTAINABLE ERA OF SPACE EXPLORATION

**Abstract**

Five years ago, soon after his nomination as ESA Director General, Jan Wörner announced the concept of a Moon Village as “an environment where both international cooperation and the commercialization of space can thrive”. Today, this concept is more alive than ever and is rapidly moving to its implementation through a series of lunar resources missions planned for as soon as 2021.

In line with the spirit of cooperation and sustainability of the Moon Village, this paper addresses how lunar resources activities can become a model for fair and sustainable space exploration through the development of a Social License to Operate (SLO).

SLO is defined as the efforts made by a company or entity in order to give back part of the wealth it produces to the community where it operates. On Earth, this is usually done through environmentally friendly practices, information disclosure and a various range of activities aimed at community support such as job creations, educational activities and technology transfer.

*Mutatis mutandis*, current Earth practice on SLO can be implemented in lunar resources activities in order to ensure that they are conducted “for the benefit and interest of all Countries”, as required by Article I OST. Building on the research conducted by the Hague International Space Resources Governance Working Group, this paper will explore how lunar resources activities can shape a new era of fair and sustainable space exploration through the development of a Social License to Operate.

Guided by the principle of adaptive governance, the paper will propose a “model” SLO that is suitable for the first steps of lunar resources activities. The main goal of this model will be to ensure the circularity of such activities, so to reduce dependence from Earth and provide a virtuous model for future space exploration missions.

This will be achieved through the development of SLO conditions requiring, inter alia, the minimization of economic waste of lunar resources, the sharing of scientific information on the lunar environment, transparent reporting, capacity building and sustainable environmental practices.

Based on the above, the paper will conclude that the development of a Social License to Operate can pave the way for lunar resources activities to shape a new era for a fair and sustainable space exploration.

Please note that the present abstract is submitted under the auspices of the Space Generation Advisory Council, as part of the activities of the Space Exploration Project Group.