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THE REGISTRATION OF LUNAR ACTIVITIES: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE
REGISTRATION PROJECT**Abstract**

The obligation to register space objects on a public registry is a fundamental principle of the law of outer space. In a field where many principles lay untested, the obligation to register has a long history of compliance. Counting thousands of registrations, the Registration Convention is arguably the most actively utilized space treaty.

The obligation to register has three far-reaching implications in the effort to promote the peaceful use of outer space. First and foremost, registration ensures transparency regarding the peaceful nature of space activities. Further, registration clarifies which state has “jurisdiction and control” of space objects, while also allocating responsibility and liability by identifying the launching state. Finally, through registration States Parties to the Outer Space Treaty fulfill their duty to act with “due regard” and avoid “harmful interference” by providing notice of existing space activities.

Despite the success of the Registration Convention, it is showing its age. A new era of space exploration is upon us and the Registration Convention no longer suffices to meet the needs of this new age as we establish a human presence on the Moon and Mars. In the authors’ views, the Registration Convention fall short for the following reasons. First, the Registration Convention was intended primarily for the registration of objects in Earth orbit, not for missions on celestial bodies. Second, and related to the first, the Registration Convention was designed for the registration of space “objects”, not space activities. Finally, and very relevant for the purposes of lunar upfront coordination, the Registration Convention does not provide for registration of planned, future activities.

With the intention of creating a neutral international platform for the multilateral discussion of these critical issues, the Registration Project was launched earlier this year as a joint venture between the Moon Village Association and the Global Space Law Center. The authors served as the co-chairs of the Registration Project and collected a diverse group of twenty-five experts in space law, business, engineering, and policy from all over the world. The Registration Project held multiple workshops – at first the workshops were open only to the members, but the discussion was then opened up in public workshops via Zoom. This paper will present the results of the Registration Project, which will include recommendations for how to improve the law and practice of registering space objects and activities in both the near and long-term.