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INCENTIVIZING INVESTMENT AND RESEARCH IN SPACE DEBRIS MITIGATION AND
REMOVAL THROUGH DOMESTIC LICENSING

Abstract

The presence of space debris in orbit around Earth presents an issue to the continued utilization of space including planned space stations in low Earth orbit and commercial space tourism. The lack of clear international standards regarding space debris mitigation and removal is detrimental to every launch today and in the future. Domestic licensing requirements of many states do not require any space debris mitigation or removal plan. International organizations and States need to work together to incentivize investment in space debris mitigation and removal technologies and companies. Creating heightened licensing requirements at the domestic level, requiring those launching in their state to have a contingency plan in the event space debris is created by their object, will cause investment in mitigation and removal technologies. By creating a need for these technologies outside of conservation of the space environment, a market is created where these technologies will be in high demand. The plans for heightened licensing requirements can be announced in advance, allowing launching entities the ability to find a reliable space debris mitigation and removal plan and provider, and allow time for the investment in these providers. International organizations can aid in this process by promoting and distributing guidelines for domestic legislation, creating an opportunity for international soft law to develop as well. As States and international organizations with influence begin promoting the requirement of contingency plans for space debris and mitigation, the role of the launching state in this process will not be lost. Utilizing the licensing process to ensure space debris is taken care of by the entity launching the object, will ensure the principles of the Outer Space Treaty are being followed by those launching under their flag.