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Political, Legal, Institutional and Economic Aspects of Space Debris Mitigation and Removal - STM
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BRIDGING NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS ON SPACE DEBRIS REMEDIATION

Abstract

After more than a decade of discussion, several countries are making plans for space debris remediation demonstration missions. The European Union, Japan, United Kingdom, and United States have announced plans, proposals, or contracts for national efforts to remove individual pieces of their own debris from orbit. While a positive step forward, these efforts by themselves are unlikely to resolve the long-standing policy, economic, and legal obstacles to creating widespread international efforts to clean up existing space debris.

This paper discusses two proposals - one national and one international - that combined together can help move towards more widespread remediation efforts. First, it outlines a more robust national space debris remediation program for the United States that is modeled on NASA's very successful programs to develop Commercial Cargo and Crew capabilities, which could also be implemented in other countries. Second, it discusses how a trusted non-governmental broker can establish international agreements and contracts that in turn help foster international space debris remediation efforts. Combined, these two proposals provide a roadmap for both national governments and the international community as a whole to put in place a robust space debris remediation effort.