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Political, Legal, Institutional and Economic Aspects of Space Debris Mitigation and Removal - STM
Security (8-E9.1)

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GAINING NATIONAL SUPPORT FOR SPACE SUSTAINABILITY - THE UK APPROACH

Abstract

This presentation will outline how the UK Space Agency has promoted the need for space sustainability to strategic decision makers, leading to increased political and policy attention. The authors will discuss lessons learned, relevant programmes and their links to international activity. Though each government is unique it is hoped the UK experience might support colleagues from around the world also seeking to promote space sustainability within their nations.

The UK has a history of participating in multinational efforts to enable the safety and security of space. These efforts include opening the Outer Space Treaty for signature in 1967 alongside the US and USSR; hosting numerous sensors for the US Space Safety Network; co-founding the EU Space Surveillance and Tracking (SST) programme; leading contributions to the ESA Space Safety Programme; and authoring a UN resolution on responsible behaviours in space.

The UK Space Agency is now accelerating national projects, alongside the international efforts outlined above, to grow civil SSA capability and remove legacy UK debris from orbit. The increased focus on these projects will not surprise many in the space sector, who see them as necessary and crucial. But making the case for SSA and space sustainability means, in the UK, convincing decision-makers from outside the space sector about why maintaining the space environment is crucial for everyone. Non-expert political and policy leaders need to understand and agree the importance of space if they are to prioritise funding and other support.

UK Space Agency personnel will outline how they made the case for accelerating national space sustainability projects. The presentation will outline some of the key arguments which may (or may not) gain influence with policy decision-makers.

The authors will provide a 2022 update on the UK's latest work on projects related to space debris and In-Orbit Servicing, following the specification of space sustainability as an objective of the UK's National Space Strategy.