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MANAGING SUSTAINABILITY IN SPACE: PERSPECTIVES FOR SPACE RESOURCES  
UTILIZATION

**Abstract**

In the last decades, humanity has gained increased awareness of the necessity to consider the impact our activities have on the environment. Beyond the question of the intrinsic value of our environment, it has become clear that long-term activities depend on the integration of environmental concerns in our planning and execution. Our shared experience on Earth has proven that careless use of natural resources endangers the long-term viability of our industrial activities. This is also true for our activities beyond our planet – as demonstrated by the much-discussed issue of increased space debris in orbit. This is where the concept of “sustainability” comes into play. It has become an unequivocal prerequisite for any lasting activity – in space as well as on Earth. In essence, sustainability relies on the responsible use and rational management of resources for the benefit of both present and future generations. In the words of the International Court of Justice in *Gabcikovo-Nagymaros*, the term “sustainability” expresses the need to “reconcile economic development with protection of the environment”. It is about striking a fair compromise between the developments of our space activities and the allocation of outer space natural resources, taking into account the needs of future generations. This contribution focuses in particular on sustainability within the context of space resources utilization. It aims to define rules for sustainability in space and to identify a legal model to enforce them. To that end, the first section builds a framework around core elements of the principle of sustainable development. Section two confronts the framework to current legal instruments regulating space activities, both binding and non-binding. Lastly, section three discusses potential models to manage sustainability in space and gives an outline of rules that could be enforced to that end.