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BACK ON THE MOON: FROM AN ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVE.

Abstract

In March 2022, for the first time ever, a piece of space debris crashed unintentionally on the Moon. There is at the moment around 200.000Kg of human waste on the surface of the Moon. This demonstrates that even without carrying out activities on the surface of the Moon, humans managed to pollute the Earth's natural satellite. Pollution existed since the beginning of human exploration and will intensely increase with the future activities that will be carried out on the surface of the Moon. Therefore, this paper tries to analyse whether the legal instruments governing the use and exploration of the Moon contain provisions on the protection of the lunar environment. It also looks at the different initiatives undertaken to that end. The first chapter of this article gives a look at the UN instruments governing space law. Indeed, it tries to determine whether the UN framework, consisting of both the guidelines and the UN space treaties, is sufficient in order to govern the activities on the Moon with environmental considerations. The importance of this chapter lies in looking at the definitions and examining to what extent the space treaties are applicable to the Moon, in light of the environmental protection. Subsequently, the second chapter analyses whether the international environmental law contains principles that could be relevant for the protection of the Moon. The protection of the environment on Earth is becoming more and more effective and important. As a result, it is interesting to establish whether these major principles could apply for the lunar environment, and to analyse the implications that could carry with it. Finally, the last chapter focuses on the recent initiatives that have been undertaken in relation to the Moon and concludes with a discussion on potential solutions that could lead to an environmental protection of the Moon. The paper calls for collaboration, for an initiative that needs to be undertaken in order to create a framework that could prevent the Moon environment from all human activities that are to be developed on the satellite.