

IAF SPACE EXPLORATION SYMPOSIUM (A3)
Space Exploration Overview (1)

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COSPAR PLANETARY PROTECTION POLICY : RECENT ADVANCES

Abstract

Planetary protection is a set of measures agreed upon at an international level to ensure the protection of scientific investigation during space exploration. In this sense, the Committee on Space Research (COSPAR) provides the international standard for planetary protection as well as a forum for international consultation. COSPAR has formulated a Planetary Protection Policy with associated requirements for responsible space exploration. Although not legally binding under international law, the standard offered by the Policy is internationally endorsed along with implementation guidelines supplied for reference in support States' compliance with Article IX of the UN Outer Space Treaty. Indeed, States parties to the Outer Space Treaty (under Article VI) are responsible for any space activities in their countries, governmental and non-governmental. The main goal of this Policy is to avoid compromising the search for any lifeforms on other celestial bodies and to protect the Earth from a potential threat posed by extraterrestrial samples returned by an inter-planetary mission.

The COSPAR Planetary Protection Policy has defined five categories, depending on the target and objective of the specific space mission, and requirements with various degrees of rigor in the contamination control applied. The Policy is assessed regularly and updated with new scientific findings and in conjunction with the fast-evolving space exploration milieu.

The COSPAR Panel on Planetary Protection (PPP) is a designated international committee composed of scientists, agency representatives and space experts. Its role is to support and revise the COSPAR Policy and its related requirements (<https://cosparhq.cnes.fr/scientific-structure/panels/panel-on-planetary-protection-ppp/>). The Panel's activities deal with the individual needs of a space mission while exercising swift care and expertise to ensure sustainable exploration of the Solar System. We will present recent considerations on the Venus and small bodies requirements, as well as advances and updates of the Policy as concerns the Moon, Mars and icy satellites (see References).

References

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