

IISL COLLOQUIUM ON THE LAW OF OUTER SPACE (E7)  
Recent Developments in Space Law with Particular Focus on Space Debris Remediation (7)

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HEADING FOR THE STARS AND SPACE LAW: THE CASE OF SAUDI ARABIA

**Abstract**

Saudi Arabia's decision to withdraw from the 1979 Moon Agreement has made the news. Official reasons for this move, made on 30 October 2022 (Royal Decree No. 42) and taking effect on 5 January 2024, are yet to be revealed, but the Kingdom has already announced its ambitious target: to return to outer space four decades after the first Saudi astronaut's flight, and reach the top ten spacefaring states.

The first national space policy of KSA, whose publication is expected in spring 2023, is taking shape based on "Saudi Vision 2030" which aims at transforming the nation into "a pioneering and successful global model of excellence, on all fronts". The nascent space sector, in its turn, positions itself as a "key contributor to Saudi Arabia's growth and prosperity and as an enabler of future generations, to benefit humankind". It is the task of the Saudi Space Commission (SSC) to govern and promote the national space industry, including through development of plans, policies and programs related to the space sector, as well as implementation of the National Space Strategy (paras. 1-2 Section 3 of the SSC Charter).

SSC intends, *inter alia*, to organize and develop national satellite communications, navigation and Earth observation systems, advance space launch technology (including for suborbital flights), engage in space observation and tracking, space debris monitoring, early warning and other related activities (paras. 4-7 *ibid.*). Special emphasis is placed on space safety, international cooperation, education and training of professionals for the Saudi space sector (para. 8 *ibid.*). The need to deal with the most pertinent issues, including space debris remediation, protection of dark and quiet skies, long-term sustainability of space activities, is acknowledged at the highest political level in the Kingdom.

Although the hierarchy of Saudi authorities in charge of space activities is still taking form, the development of national space legislation is already ongoing. Alongside with SSC's powers to establish requirements for the development and implementation of space sector infrastructure and operation, the Communications, Space and Technology Commission (CST) is also responsible for regulating space activities, including their licensing and control. The clear trend to support entrepreneurial initiatives in the space field, as well as the need to comply with the Kingdom's international commitments (including under the Artemis Accords) require due domestic regulation which is expected to emerge soon.