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SGAC ETHICS AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN SPACE: A SURVEY OF THE NEXT GENERATION

Abstract

Increased commercial and government activity in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) and beyond has caused a recent growing interest in global space law and governance. NASA's Artemis Accords, the most recent attempt at a global treaty for conduct in outer space, has so far received signatures from over 20 countries. The orbital debris crisis as well as other issues have brought the need for national and international space policy frameworks. Many concerns remain for how to construct this framework in a way that ensures accountability from various space actors, but even more important unspoken underlying questions about the very nature of our engagement with outer space remain: Who should benefit from space exploration? Should we allow terraforming of other planets? How does space exploration impact sustainability efforts on Earth? The youngest generation of students, space lawyers, and scientists have an explicit interest in investigating these questions, as we are the ones who will face the consequences of reckless behavior in space.

The Space Generation Advisory Council (SGAC) is an international community that aims to bring together young professionals in the space industry and provide them with a space to create an impact. SGAC was created to support the United Nations (UN) Programme on Space Applications, and it has Permanent Observer status at the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. Additionally, SGAC has an extensive global network with members in over 160 countries. This positions SGAC well to conduct a survey about the views of young professionals on various ethical questions about space exploration. This report reflects the diverse ethical positions of young people in the space industry through summarizing the results of a survey conducted by the SGAC Ethics and Human Rights Project Group.

This survey, which was offered to all SGAC members to participate in, polled respondents on the topics of diversity in the space sector, satellite technology in LEO, the orbital debris crisis, planetary protection, off-earth space infrastructure, space settlements, space resource utilization, and first contact. Our report is one of the first to focus on the perspective of young professionals in space, and it summarizes valuable information about how the next generation plans to contribute to the decade of space exploration.