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ARIAS'S APPROACH TO BRIDGING THE GAP: INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL LAW INTO
SPACE SUSTAINABILITY DISCOURSE

Abstract

In recent years, the issue of space sustainability has garnered increasing attention globally, culminating in the adoption of UNCOPUOS' Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities. However, a common critique persists: the tendency to approach space sustainability with a silo mentality, addressing specific aspects such as space mining, debris mitigation, or preserving dark and quiet skies in isolation. This fragmented approach fails to recognize the interconnected nature of space sustainability issues and impedes the development of global adaptive solutions.

Central to this discourse is the often-overlooked role of environmental law. Despite the evident environmental implications of space activities, the dedicated field of environmental law is frequently sidelined. Yet, legal frameworks, both international and national, offer opportunities for addressing space sustainability challenges. Article III of the Outer Space Treaty acknowledges the applicability of international law in outer space, while national environmental laws extend jurisdiction over space activities on Earth within their jurisdiction.

In response to this gap, a group of young legal scholars decided to create in 2023 a global non-profit non-governmental association to serve as a nexus for connecting researchers in space law and environmental law, dedicated to advancing legal scholarship on space sustainability. The Association for International Legal Research on Space Sustainability (ARIAS) is committed to raising public awareness of legal dimensions concerning the environmental sustainability of space activities and to fostering global legal research initiatives in this field. Emphasizing collaboration and cross-pollination of expertise, ARIAS encourages dialogue among legal professionals specializing in space law and environmental law to identify synergies and enhance understanding. Through these efforts, ARIAS endeavors to promote a comprehensive approach to space sustainability by investigating the opportunity of integrating environmental law principles into space governance frameworks. This contribution aims to highlight ARIAS's initiatives and delve into the interplay between environmental law and space activities, underscoring their compatibility and potential for synergy in addressing the urgent challenges of space sustainability.