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LTS 2.0—APPROACHING SOLUTIONS TO NEW CHALLENGES OR BECOMING A POLITICAL
ARENA IN THE FIELD OF OUTER SPACE?

Abstract

The long-term sustainability of outer space activities (LTS) has been the most prominent agenda in outer space ever since its inception in 2010. Admittedly, with a wide coverage, the adopted preamble and 21 guidelines of LTS play an indispensable role in shaping the criteria, regulations as well as policies in diverse aspects of space activities. But its essence as soft law and its voluntary implementation dooms that this agenda would confront with a variety of challenges. The LTS 2.0 consultation in the recent years shed light on divergence upon the balance of three pillars of the mandate of the LTS 2.0 Working Group, the standards of the implementation of the guidelines and whether to generate new guidelines for the emerged new challenges that are not captured or adequately covered by the existing guidelines. Indeed, states still actively involved in the consultation and favorable national mapping exercises towards the implementation of the guidelines are conducted in multiple states. Comparing with the living discussion back in the LTS 1.0, however, the recent LTS 2.0 consultation seems to enter into a freezing transition period when states slow down the pace and being less motivated to promote the generation of new possible guidelines. Except for the conference room papers with respect to the implementation of the guidelines, rare proposal has been put forward. The 61st Session of Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, Copuos closed in February witnessed another year of shortfall in substantive output. The core issues lies in the redefining the status of LTS guidelines and finding ways to accommodate the differing needs of states. As member of the Chinese delegation these years, I would focus on the controversies during the past sessions and put forward my own views on whether LTS 2.0 is approaching solutions to new challenges or becoming a political arena in the field of outer space solutions based on the recent dynamics. The paper aims to breakthrough LTS's present dilemma and finds a way forward.