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THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSION FORUMS IN FOSTERING A COHERENT AND
COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO NORMS OF RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR.

Abstract

There exist numerous forums where norms are discussed: technical ones (where technical standards can evolve into norms of responsible behavior), political forums, private initiatives, multilateral and bilateral platforms, among others. Which forum would be the most suitable for discussing norms of responsible behavior in space? Does this abundance of forums facilitate or hinder the dissemination of norms of responsible behavior? Is there overall coherence? What would be the most effective methodology for socializing a significant number of states to the norms of responsible behavior in space? Should the approach be bottom-up, top-down, or a combination of both? The question of methodology is crucial, given the expanding involvement of a wide range of players (both state and non-state), which increasingly encompasses all states worldwide. Presently, most forums are dominated by space powers, understandably due to the significance of the space sector for them. However, how can we better integrate emerging spacefaring nations and their space ecosystems? The level of familiarity with space culture should not impede the participation of countries with limited in-orbit capabilities. They should receive support in their assimilation to space activities. Emerging spacefaring nations must have a voice and their viewpoints considered. It is essential for these players to have confidence in the evolving model to ensure compliance and enforcement. This paper aims to scrutinize existing forums discussing norms, be they technical (such as IADC, ISO...), political (in the United Nations: Open-Ended Working Group, Group of Governmental Experts...), private initiatives (such as the Space Data Association, the Global Satellite Operator's Association) or non-governmental forums (Secure World Foundation...), to offer recommendations on how best to include emerging states in the international space discussions, and ensure overall coherence for the benefit of all space stakeholders.