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## LEGAL ASPECTS OF SPACE ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINABILITY

**Abstract**

This paper would analyse the existing international legal and regulatory framework to address the environmental aspects of outer space. In the current context of increasing commercialisation and privatisation of space activities, it is imperative to introduce a regulatory regime for international space behaviour, especially the private entities, to ensure that the ability of mankind to use outer space for long term socio-economic benefits is not compromised.

The issue of space debris has assumed such paramount significance that the associated legal provisions have attained the status of international customary law. Although the IADC technical guidelines and the UNGA Resolution are yet not legally binding, there is a level of national implementation in the licensing process that the US, the United Kingdom, and other governments are developing. While problems arise in particular regarding the allocation of spectrum and orbital positions, limited liberalisation of space markets, restricted exploitation of market opportunities owing to export controls, space debris continue to accumulate and several standardisation questions remain open.

The contemporary scheme of international space law presents a plethora of entangled complex issues. Some of the questions which will be considered in this paper include: Which satellite should be removed if there is a risk of collision between two satellites? Which satellite operator should be held responsible if both were aware of the impending collision risk and omitted to act? Also, the liability issues in case of a collision inadvertently caused by a collision avoidance manoeuvre will be discussed.

Although the present legal structure does accommodate a number of basic components, yet there are several issues that remain unresolved. This study will focus on some of those loopholes present in the system and attempt to offer certain plugging recommendations. Some space-faring countries still do not have space laws or have developing legislation that covers only certain types of space activities. A mandate for sustainable development in space in the form of a Space Sustainability Agreement is needed in the areas of overlap or integration between the economic, social and environmental fields of law.