



## **2026 ANNUAL SPACE LAW SYMPOSIUM**

**UNCOPUOS LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE  
VIENNA, APRIL 14TH, 2026, 15:00 – 18:00  
VIENNA INTERNATIONAL CENTER, BOARDROOM C**

### **LEGAL APPROACHES FOR A SAFE SPACE ENVIRONMENT**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Space-based infrastructure has become indispensable to modern societies and economies. Satellite services support essential functions across positioning, navigation and timing, telecommunications, environmental monitoring, disaster risk reduction, and the protection of critical infrastructure. Today, all States rely, directly or indirectly, on the continued availability, safety, and reliability of space-enabled services.

At the same time, the space environment is undergoing rapid and unprecedented transformation. The number of space objects in orbit has increased significantly, driven by the expansion of both governmental and commercial space activities. Recent estimates indicate that more than 14,000 operational satellites are currently in orbit, alongside millions of debris fragments of varying sizes, particularly concentrated in low Earth orbit. Projections suggest that the number of satellites may continue to increase substantially in the coming decades, further intensifying the operational complexity of the orbital environment.

These developments underscore the importance of effective legal and policy frameworks to ensure the safety, sustainability, and long-term usability of outer space. They raise important questions relating to the authorization and supervision of space activities, the prevention and mitigation of space debris, the attribution of responsibility and liability, and the development of practical mechanisms to support safe and coordinated space operations.

In this context, COPUOS and especially its Legal Subcommittee play a central role as the primary multilateral forum for the progressive development of international space law and governance. The IISL/ECSL Symposium contributes to these efforts by providing a platform for expert exchange and academic reflection on emerging legal challenges and potential approaches to strengthen the safety and sustainability of the space environment. Through informed dialogue and interdisciplinary

perspectives, the Symposium aims to support COPUOS Member States in advancing shared understanding and reinforcing the legal foundations for the peaceful and sustainable use of outer space for the benefit of all countries.

## II. EVENT PROGRAM

<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Topic</b>
Dr. PJ Blount (USA, Durham University)	Normative Aspects of Technical Governance for Space Safety.
Dr. Guoyu Wang (China, Beijing Institute of Technology)	Is there a right of way in space?  The need for legal criteria to attribute liability and responsibility in case of orbital collisions
Dr. Holger Krag (Germany, European Space Agency)	Technology as enabler of future regulation for orbital safety
Mr. Federico Di Vruno (Argentina, Square Kilometer Array Observatory)	The need for legal action on dark and quiet skies
Dr. Maria Nonyana Mokabane (South Africa, South African Space Council)	When the sky falls: legal challenges of space debris re-entering on Earth
Mr. Nobuyuki Kikuchi (Japan, Permanent Mission)	Legal aspects of active debris removal for sustainable space governance

Format: in person, no interpretation, hybrid format possible for attendees

Duration: 3 hours

Opening remarks: IISL & ECSL Reps, UNOOSA Director (5 mins each, 15 mins total)

Presentations: Individual presentations from the Speakers (15 mins each, 90 minutes total)

Panel: interactive discussion on outstanding issues and Q&A with the Delegations, co-moderated by IISL & ECSL Reps (60 minutes)

Closing remarks: IISL & ECSL Reps (10 mins total)

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