

15 April 2024

English only

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**Committee on the Peaceful  
Uses of Outer Space**  
**Legal Subcommittee**  
**Sixty-third session**  
Vienna, 15–26 April 2024  
Item 6 of the provisional agenda\*\*  
**Status and application of the five United Nations  
treaties on outer space, and ways and means,  
including capacity-building, to promote their  
implementation**

**Growth of Committee Membership and Universalisation of  
the Five United Nations Treaties on Space Law**

**Submitted by the Secure World Foundation**

**Note by the Secretariat**

The present conference room paper was prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of information received from the Secure World Foundation.

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\* Reissued for technical reasons on 16 April 2024.

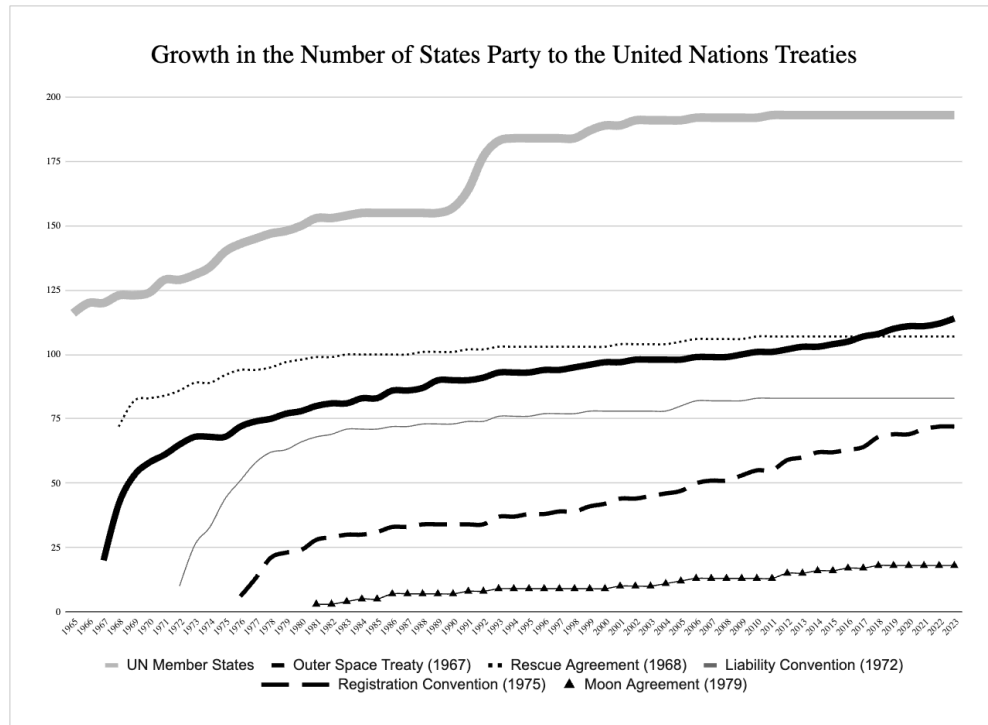
\*\* [A/AC.105/C.2/L.326](#).



## Growth of Committee Membership and Universalisation of the Five United Nations Treaties on Space Law

Submitted by the Secure World Foundation

The past decade has seen a notable growth in membership to the various United Nations treaties on outer space. Figure 1 depicts the historical growth in ratification/accession/succession of the five United Nations treaties on outer space across the previous decades, perhaps most notably with the steady growth of the 1975 Registration Convention.



**Fig. 1 – Growth in States Parties to the Five United Nations Treaties on Outer Space**

The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (“the Committee”) now has one hundred and two (102) member States, with Uzbekistan and Guatemala as its newest members joining in 2022. What are the implications of the growth of Committee membership for the universalization of the existing United Nations treaties on outer space? In terms of space law, one such implication deals with the list of States Parties to the various United Nations treaties.

### The Committee Membership and States Parties to the 1967 Outer Space Treaty

As 1 January 2023, the Outer Space Treaty had one hundred and twelve (112) States Parties, with an additional twenty-three (23) signatory States.<sup>1</sup> During the calendar year of 2023, both Panama<sup>2</sup> and Croatia<sup>3</sup> joined the States Parties to the Outer Space Treaty, bringing the updated total number to one hundred and fourteen (114) States

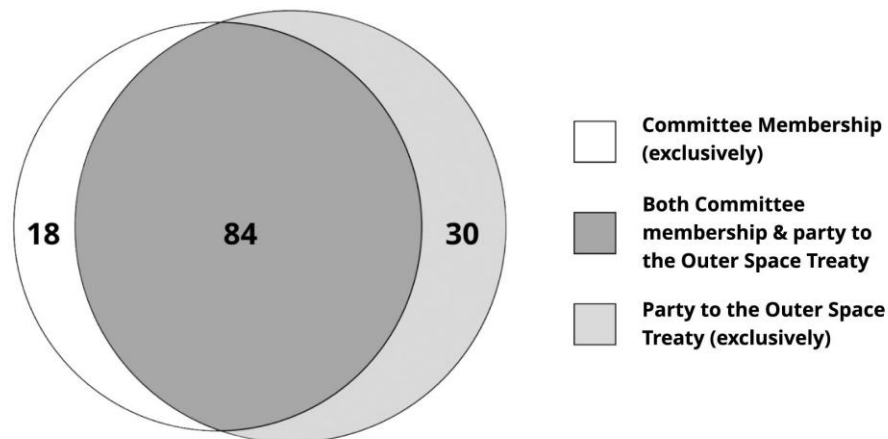
<sup>1</sup> Legal Subcommittee of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, *Status of International Agreements relating to activities in outer space as at 1 January 2023*, A/AC.105/C.2/2023/CRP.3 (20 March 2023), [https://www.unoosa.org/res/oosadoc/data/documents/2023/aac\\_105c\\_22023crp/aac\\_105c\\_22023crp\\_3\\_0\\_html/AC105\\_C2\\_2023\\_CRP03E.pdf](https://www.unoosa.org/res/oosadoc/data/documents/2023/aac_105c_22023crp/aac_105c_22023crp_3_0_html/AC105_C2_2023_CRP03E.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Panama – Depository Notification, 11 Aug. 2023, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Space-Outer-Space-Treaty-Notification-of-Deposit-of-Instrument-Panama-Aug.-9-2023.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Croatia – Depository Notification, 13 Mar. 2023, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Space-Outer-Space-Treaty-Notification-of-Deposit-of-Instrument-Croatia-Mar.-10-2023.pdf>.

Parties to the Outer Space Treaty, now with an updated total of twenty-two (22) States which have signed but not yet ratified the Outer Space Treaty.<sup>4</sup>

There is now significant overlap between the States which are, on the one hand, party to the Outer Space Treaty, and on the other hand, members of the Committee. There are eighty-four (84) States which are both Committee members and which are States Parties to the Outer Space Treaty.<sup>5</sup>



**Fig. 2 – Overlap of Committee Membership and States Parties to the Outer Space Treaty**

However, there remain thirty (30) States which are States Parties to the Outer Space Treaty that are not yet members of the Committee. A meeting of this Committee seeing all the States Parties to the Outer Space Treaty in attendance would therefore require those thirty States to join.

#### **Committee Membership and States Parties to the 1975 Registration Convention**

The situation is markedly different in regards to the 1975 Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space.<sup>6</sup> With the most recent accessions, last year, to the Registration Convention by Paraguay<sup>7</sup> and Romania,<sup>8</sup> there are now seventy-five (75) States Parties to the Registration Convention, with an additional three (3) signatory States.

Here there is significant overlap between members of the Committee and States Parties to the Registration Convention. There are now sixty-six (66) States which are members of the Committee and are party to the Registration Convention. With an additional three (3) Committee members which have signed but not yet ratified the

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, Status of International Agreements relating to Activities in Outer Space – Latest Depository Notifications, <https://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/spacelaw/treaties/status/index.html> (last accessed 10 Apr. 2024).

<sup>5</sup> There are an additional ten (10) States which have signed but not yet ratified the Outer Space Treaty and are members of the Committee. Which means a total of ninety-four (94) States with the Committee Membership and with obligations under the Outer Space Treaty. The ten (10) States which have signed but not yet ratified the Outer Space Treaty and are the Committee members are: Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cameroon, Colombia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Malaysia, Philippines, and Rwanda.

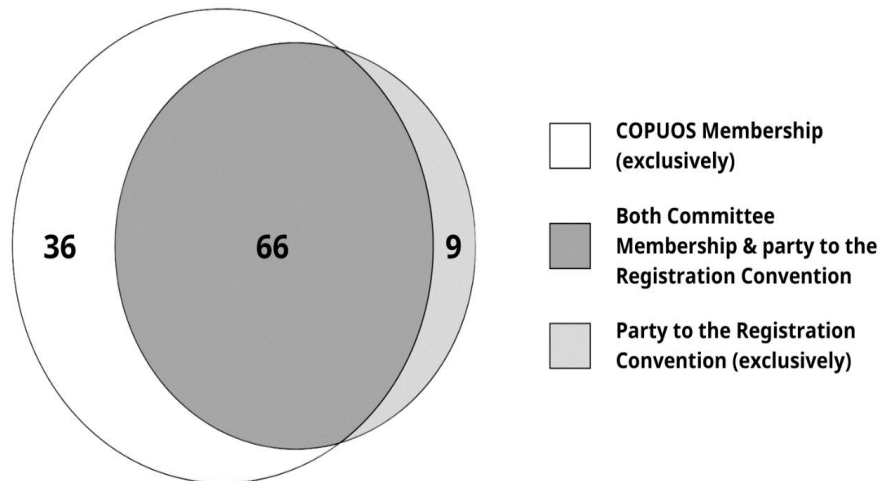
<sup>6</sup> Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space (1023 UNTS 15).

<sup>7</sup> Paraguay – Depository Notification, 19 Jan. 2023, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/CN/2023/CN.18.2023-Eng.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Romania – Depository Notification, 10 Feb. 2023, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/CN/2023/CN.44.2023-Eng.pdf>.

treaty, there are a total of sixty-nine (69) States with Committee membership and obligations under the Registration Convention.

This is the closest overlap between Committee membership and a State's status as a State Party to one of the five United Nations Treaties on outer space. In fact, there are only nine (9) remaining States which are States Parties to the Registration Convention who have yet to join this Committee.<sup>9</sup>



**Fig. 3 – Overlap of Committee Membership and the Registration Convention**

With the accelerating growth of this Committee, we may only be a few years away from a situation where all the States Parties to the Registration Convention are also Committee members. Those remaining nine (9) remaining States Parties to the Registration Convention may soon pursue Committee membership. The Principality of Liechtenstein, which is a Party to the Registration Convention, has recently submitted a letter to be an ad hoc observer to this session of the Subcommittee.<sup>10</sup> If they were to join this Committee, there would only be eight (8) remaining parties of the Registration Convention who are not yet members of the Committee.

Every State Party of the Registration Convention meeting here at this Committee would be historically significant, and significant under the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties and the provisions it contains regarding subsequent agreements of the States Parties of a treaty.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Antigua and Barbuda, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Montenegro, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Serbia, and Seychelles.

<sup>10</sup> Permanent Mission of the Principality of Liechtenstein, *Note Verbale*, 4 Apr. 2024, [https://www.unoosa.org/documents/pdf/copuos/lsc/2024/NV\\_Registration\\_Liechtenstein\\_LSC\\_20240404.pdf](https://www.unoosa.org/documents/pdf/copuos/lsc/2024/NV_Registration_Liechtenstein_LSC_20240404.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Vienna Convention on The Law Of Treaties (1155 UNTS 331) (1969), "Article 31 – *General rule of interpretation*. 3. There shall be taken into account, together with the context: (a) any subsequent agreement between the parties regarding the interpretation of the treaty or the application of its provisions;"

The 1975 Registration Convention is one of the most important treaties on outer space – requiring a national registry of space objects, and the international registration of a launching state’s launched space objects. Its provisions are significant mechanisms for enhancing transparency and confidence in, and about, space activities, which serve as public notice as to the extent and scope of a State’s national space activities. The Registration Convention also contains provisions regarding its amendment,<sup>12</sup> and the process for calling for a review conference.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> “Article IX. Any State Party to this Convention may propose amendments to the Convention. Amendments shall enter into force for each State Party to the Convention accepting the amendments upon their acceptance by a majority of the States Parties to the Convention and thereafter for each remaining State Party to the Convention on the date of acceptance by it.” As of 2024, with a total of seventy-five (75) States Parties to the Registration Convention, a majority would therefore constitute thirty-eight (38) States parties to the Treaty.

<sup>13</sup> “Article X. Ten years after the entry into force of this Convention, the question of the review of the Convention shall be included in the provisional agenda of the United Nations General Assembly in order to consider, in the light of past application of the Convention, whether it requires revision. However, at any time after the Convention has been in force for five years, at the request of one third of the States Parties to the Convention and with the concurrence of the majority of the States Parties, a conference of the States Parties shall be convened to review this Convention. Such review shall take into account in particular any relevant technological developments, including those relating to the identification of space objects.” With a total of seventy-five (75) States Parties to the Registration, a mere twenty-five (25) States Parties might request such a review conference.