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Topic: Revising the Outer Space Treaty

“Exploration is wired into our brains. If we can see the horizon we want to know what’s beyond.” - Buzz Aldrin

Since 1957, when the first artificial satellite was sent into space, space exploration has advanced significantly. Many nations have been able to utilize the resources of this uncharted and limitless space thanks to technological advancements. Undoubtedly, this started a race between several nations. The Outer Space Treaty of 1967 was ratified by the UN to guarantee the peaceful use of space and to forbid the stationing of WMDs in orbit before things get out of hand. Although this historic document offers mutual benefit, its ambiguity brings about a need to keep its policies updated with current times.

After joining the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOUS) in 2010, Tunisia has been actively involved in several international and local forums for the peaceful use of space. It signed a Memorandum of Understanding with India on June 11, 2019, on cooperation in space exploration and its peaceful usage. Tunisia further acknowledges the necessity of a border to demarcate space and national airspace and feels that member nations could control the authority to launch such flights based on the rights and responsibilities established by their local governments if a set of rules and regulations applicable to suborbital aircraft were established. In addition, private businesses subject to Tunisian law are overseen by Tunisia by the sixth article of the Outer Space Treaty to reduce the risk of conflict in space.

Because of the vagueness of the Outer Space Treaty's clauses, different countries may interpret the legislation differently. Although there is no clear definition of what constitutes damage in the Outer Space Treaty, it holds governments accountable for the harm they produce in space. It is necessary to establish a framework that specifies the compensation that States get for different types of experimental flights. It is crucial to classify and identify any harm or destruction sustained by spacecraft as well as by orbital and suborbital flights. According to the treaty, no nation is allowed to claim territory in space. Nonetheless, a lot of nations are enacting laws to create authority over resources extracted from space. These resources must be shared by nations. This means that an agreement is necessary to guarantee that technologically developed nations fairly distribute space resources to less developed nations.  This has the potential to close the gap between industrialized and developing nations. To maintain both the peaceful exploration of space and harmonious relations among member states, a revised treaty is imperative.

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