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Topic: Revising the Outer Space Treaty

*“Space exploration is a force of nature unto itself that no other force in society can rival.”*

-Neil deGrasse Tyson

The Outer Space Treaty was created to reserve space exclusively for peaceful and scientific purposes for all nations and to promote international cooperation in space exploration. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty bans the stationing of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in outer space, prohibits military activities on celestial bodies, and details legally binding rules governing the peaceful exploration and use of space. Through UNOOSA and COPUOS the UN has facilitated international cooperation, advocated space security, developed guidelines for space sustainability, and started campaigns to maintain peaceful and practical space exploration.

Although Hungary had launched its astronaut program only by mid-2021, the Hungarian to Orbit (HUNOR) program is committed to being an eminent player in space exploration. It works in close collaboration with NASA and Axiom Space in strict compliance with international standards. Hungary actively seeks partnerships with other nations and international organizations such as the European Space Agency (ESA) for scientific research. The nation is committed to fostering global cooperation and advancing the peaceful exploration of outer space for the benefit of all nations and humanity. Hungary hopes to bring attention to the promotion of space sustainability including initiatives to mitigate space debris, increase awareness of space situations, and promote the adoption of practices for sustainable space utilization.

Though the Outer Space Treaty played a major role in the shaping and implementing of international space laws as well as cooperation in space exploration, it has encountered a few shortcomings. Recently, it has come to light that the boundary where the national airspace ends, and outer space begins remains unknown.  This shortfall is particularly significant as nations can claim sovereignty over airspace, but not outer space as delineated in Article I of the treaty. This presents a loophole in the Outer Space Treaty where its ability to prevent claims to areas in the low-earth orbits becomes questionable.

Hungary would like to put forward ‘The Aerospace Jurisdiction Resolution’ which aims to resolve ambiguity regarding the boundary between international airspace and outer space under the Outer Space Treaty. By providing clear definitions and guidelines, it facilitates understanding and compliance with treaty provisions, particularly addressing concerns related to sovereignty claims over airspace versus the prohibition of national appropriation of outer space. This resolution promotes legal certainty, minimizes disputes, and fosters peaceful cooperation in aerospace activities. Certain treaty articles are also frequently circumvented, with the most notable example involving the development of nuclear weapons delivery systems through non-weapon space propulsion technology. This practice allows countries to evade the prohibitions outlined in Article IV of the treaty, which stipulates that outer space must be used for peaceful purposes and prohibits the deployment of nuclear weapons in orbit. Hungary would like to focus on ensuring adherence to the Outer Space Treaty, particularly by taking on monitoring, diplomacy, capacity building, and enforcement to hold states accountable and preserve space as a peaceful domain for global benefit.

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