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Agenda – **Revising the Outer Space Treaty in Favor of Absolute Liability.**

“The sky calls to us. If we do not destroy ourselves, we will one day venture to the stars.”

– Carl Sagan

Space exploration is a significant test for humanity, and failing to pursue it sustainably and ethically is not an option. Space exploration is a catalyst for nations to build mutual understanding and trust, and international partnerships that advance common exploration goals.

In September 1977, the Soviet Union launched Kosmos 954, a satellite powered by nuclear reactors primarily fueled by uranium. Enriched uranium is extremely dangerous to living organisms, and when ingested in higher concentrations it can cause severe health effects such as cancer of bone or the liver. The Soviets lost control of the satellite around January 1978 and Kosmos 954 reentered Earth’s atmosphere. Debris from the satellite landed in North-Western Canada, and three-quarters of the radioactive core remained as fine dust in the upper atmosphere. Kosmos 954 spread radioactive debris across hundreds of miles, leading to an extensive cleanup. Although there weren’t any immediate casualties, the long-term effects remain uncounted for. The cost of liquidation of the consequences of this accident amounted to about 14million Canadian dollars, however the USSR only bore CAD 6million in the compensation request.

Another fatal incident was the collision of satellites Iridium 33 and Cosmos 2251 on February 10,2009 over Siberia. Both satellites were launched respectively by Russia and the US. 528 pieces of debris from Iridium 33 and 1,347 pieces of debris from Cosmos 2251 were dispersed within Earth’s atmosphere, and are expected to remain for atleast 100 years.

International law applicable to the collision was derived from the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and the 1972 Liability Convention, and under these treaties the “launching states” are responsible for objects on orbit. The liability Convention did dictate fault must be determined, but it lacked a legal definition on how to go about it or for accountability. In this event, neither Us or Russia claimed the damages under existing conventions.

Hence, Colombia advocates firm legal policies to be administered stating absolute liability for the prevention of such events. The owner State should bear the cost of compensation for damage to the environment, or any casualties on both global and national levels. Promoting such accountability prevents rash decision making and better risk assessment. In addition, Colombia also proposes that launching states mustn’t be held absolute responsible for the damage caused by their nationals. Here national refers to private actors. The private actors must be held absolute responsible for damages caused and their actions must be assessed for any potential risks.

The delegate of Colombia hopes that all the nations present here today introduce firm measures to prevent such future incidents and for proper legal action in case any takes place.

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