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Topic I: The Environment and Space Activity

The entirety of space activities that have been conducted thus far are a testament to humanity’s ability to innovate, to inspire and to create. Even more so, the technological advances permitted by space exploration, ranging from GPS devices to online banking systems and efficient treatment of osteoporosis, have undoubtedly accelerated human and societal development for all nations alike[[1]](#footnote-1). Although the benefits arisen from space exploration have largely justified the increase in missions to further human presence in space, various negative environmental outcomes have also resulted from it. The Republic of Ethiopia believes that the most pressing environmental issue related to spatial exploration pertains to the elimination of space debris.

The Republic of Ethiopia heavily relies on aerospace technologies for its socioeconomic activities. Namely, it uses satellite technology and remote sensing to map diverse types of soil, to understand weather patterns and to branch banks to rural areas. All of these advances aim at improving crop yield, producing surplus, and industrializing agriculture[[2]](#footnote-2). The implemented measures have already had a substantial impact on Ethiopia’s economy; its GDP between 2013 and 2014 increased by 10.6%[[3]](#footnote-3)! But, this economic boast was only rendered possible through Ethiopia’s use of foreign satellite technology. Therefore, if the issue of space debris reaches a point where Kessler syndrome is concretized, where satellite operations are hindered as a result of collisions with space junk, Ethiopia’s development and Ethiopia’s people will suffer disastrous consequences.

Considering the situation acquired urgency fairly recently, the Republic of Ethiopia hasn’t, of yet, signed treaties for the implementation of measures concerning the depletion of space debris. However, its stance on the issue remains firm. It believes that previous agreements are outdated, that liability regulations ought to be revisited, and that financial incentives ought to be put forward to encourage nations to contribute to this ever-pressing matter.

Topic II: The Militarization of Space and International Law

The beginning of space exploration occurred in the context of the Cold War. During those times, humanity rejoiced over the conquest of new frontiers, but felt an underlying fear of an impending, nuclear, space-originating attack. Over the course of the past few decades, tensions have been successfully alleviated between the main opponents of the crisis, and the peaceful use of outer space has been legitimatized, but the question of space militarization still remains an unresolved and relevant one. The Republic of Ethiopia’s stance on the topic is that outer space should maintain its status as a demilitarized environment, and as a heritage to humanity.

Ethiopia believes in the peaceful usage of outer space because of our nations’ interdependence. History has proven that global cooperation enables countries to accomplish feats that could not be done on their own. Humanity’s greatest achievement, the International Space Station, embodies just that: it’s through the sharing of capital, of resources and of savvy from 15 nations that this project came to life. International cooperation entails unmatched technological advances, and shared benefits for all nations[[4]](#footnote-4).

Ethiopia, in its promotion of international cooperation and peace, signed various treatments related to disarmament on Earth as well as in outer space. It was one of the members of the Eighteen Nation Committee on Disarmament, which acted as the predecessor of the current United Nations body for issues related to disarmament[[5]](#footnote-5). It was also one of the signatories of the Outer Space Treaty which prohibited an arms race from occurring in space[[6]](#footnote-6).

Although the Outer Space Treaty was crucial in establishing warfare regulations at the dawn of spatial exploration, the Republic of Ethiopia asserts that a more recent version should be signed and ratified[[7]](#footnote-7). It would also be open to the application of a modified version of the minimal deterrence principal, in which nations could dote themselves with the minimal technologies required for their defence, whilst registering all weapons used, and sharing their knowledge and resources as to limit the imbalance of power between nations.

Topic III: Space Commercialization

With the recent advances in aerospace technologies, asteroid mining, space tourism, and commercial sub-orbital flights will soon become our realities. The issue with such activities, however, is the lack of a legal framework to structure and regulate them. Already, the American government has passed a bill permitting citizens to exploit resources on celestial bodies. This SPACE 2015 bill is in direct opposition to the Unites Nations’ Outer Space Treaty of 1967, which states that a government cannot claim extraterrestrial resources[[8]](#footnote-8). The Republic of Ethiopia recognizes that discrepancies exist between national and international laws, and it is committed to aid in the establishment of a code of conduct for extraterrestrial commercial enterprises.

In the current state of affairs, Ethiopia does not possess a full-fledged space program (although it is underway- the creation of two optical telescopes in 2015 act as a steppingstone to the creation of an Ethiopian space agency)[[9]](#footnote-9). Therefore, asteroid mining is still out of reach for the nation, but the development and usage of this business venture by other countries could still impact Ethiopia’s economy substantially. Ethiopia’s main mineral export is gold, and companies have looked into asteroid mining specifically for the extraction of platinum and gold[[10]](#footnote-10). Therefore, if extraterrestrial resource extraction is concretized, Ethiopia is at risk of losing an enormous portion of its market. The Republic of Ethiopia recognizes the scarcity of resources present on Earth, and the consequential need to extract elsewhere, but it still urges nations to sign a treaty protecting its market share.

On the topic of space tourism and commercial space flights, Ethiopia also wishes to develop a global treaty stating the regulations for such an industry. It also preoccupies itself with the threat to safety posed by failed rocket trials of private space flight companies, which lead to deaths in some cases[[11]](#footnote-11). Thus, before legalizing the practice, Ethiopia urges the international community to come together, and to establish safety and technical requirements that a private firm ought to meet before launching humans into outer space.

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