SEZMUN
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GENERAL ASSEMBLY 1

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ISSUE OF: SAFEGUARDING GLOBAL SECURITY AND JUSTICE IN THE ERA OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL MINING

CHAIR:
EFE KINCI

CO-CHAIR:
DOĞA KARANCI

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to GA1 of SEZMUN 25. We are very excited and honoured to welcome you to our conference. We, Efe Kıncı and Doğa Karancı, prepared this chair report as guidance for our topic.

Our main topic will be Safeguarding Global Security and Justice in the Era of Extraterrestrial Mining. As technology advances rapidly, humanity is entering a new era of space exploration and resource extraction. While mining in space holds great promise for innovation, economic growth, and scientific progress, it also brings up significant ethical, legal, and security issues. How can we make sure space remains a peaceful area, free from conflict and inequality? Throughout this conference, you delegates will be encouraged to consider the implications of space mining from various viewpoints, such as legal, political, environmental, and ethical. We hope this debate will not only deepen your understanding of international cooperation in outer space but also inspire practical and sustainable solutions to upcoming challenges. We expect you, delegates, to come well prepared, and we encourage you to research thoroughly so that our debate can go smoothly. We hope you have a fun time while learning and sharing this experience with your peers. We are hoping to see you all very soon.

Best Regards.

Efe Kıncı, Doğa Karancı

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Topic Introduction

As humanity enters a new space age, extraterrestrial mining — the extraction of valuable minerals and resources from celestial bodies like the Moon, Mars, and asteroids — has been a major topic. Advances in space technology, along with the growing demand for rare metals and energy resources on Earth, has encouraged both countries and private companies to look into commercial space ventures.

However, this fast-paced development raises questions about global security, fairness, and sustainability. The current international framework, which includes the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and the 1979 Moon Agreement, offers a basis for peaceful space activities, but it lacks clear guidance on ownership rights, environmental protection, and corporate responsibility.

Therefore, ensuring global security and fairness during this time is vital because outer space is an international area that falls outside the national control of individual countries. Security in space must be the shared concern of all countries. This report aims to highlight the importance of extraterrestrial mining and its implications in today's world.

Key Terms

- **Extraterrestrial Mining** is to exploit extraterrestrial planets and space materials for their mineral value. Since our planet's resources are limited, turning to alternative sources is essential. This necessity has given rise to the field of space mining, which is already taking giant steps and building its future.

- **Outer Space Treaty (1967)** 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.

- **Militarization of Space** involves the development and use of military technology and weapons in Earth's orbit and outer space. Originating in the 1950s, this phenomenon has historical roots in military advancements, such as the early rockets that were initially designed for delivering weapons.

- **Space Resource Governance** refers to the systems, rules, and procedures established to manage and regulate human activities in outer space. Just as nations have governance structures to manage affairs within their territories, a form of global governance is becoming increasingly vital to oversee the burgeoning activities beyond Earth's atmosphere.

Key Issues

- **Lack of a Comprehensive Legal Framework:** While the Outer Space Treaty (1967) provides basic principles for the peaceful use of space, it does not specifically address resource ownership, extraction rights, or commercial activities. This legal vacuum allows powerful nations and private companies to act unilaterally, risking future disputes and inequalities.
- **Risk of Space Militarization and Resource Conflicts:** Competition over valuable materials such as helium-3, platinum, and rare earth metals may lead nations to deploy defense systems or military technologies in outer space. This contradicts the demilitarization goals of the OST and threatens international peace and security.
- **Inequality Between Developed and Developing Nations:** Only a few technologically advanced countries currently possess the capability for space mining. Without a fair system for resource-sharing, extraterrestrial wealth could deepen the gap between spacefaring nations and developing countries, creating a "space divide."
- **Environmental and Ethical Concerns:** Mining activities on celestial bodies could disrupt delicate extraterrestrial environments and potentially interfere with scientific research. Ethical questions arise about human exploitation beyond Earth and whether humanity should prioritize sustainability even outside our planet.
- **Absence of an International Monitoring Mechanism:** Currently, there is no centralized body responsible for regulating or inspecting space mining activities. The lack of supervision creates room for unauthorized extraction, environmental harm, or militarization, undermining global justice and cooperation.

Historical Background

The history of extraterrestrial mining began in the early 1960s during the Space Race when both the United States and the Soviet Union explored the Moon to evaluate its potential resources. In 1967, the Outer Space Treaty (OST) was established, prohibiting national sovereignty or ownership claims over celestial bodies.

In the 21st century, immediate advancements in space technology and the advancement of private space industries such as SpaceX, Blue Origin and Asteroid Mining Corporation have reignited global interest in space resources. The discovery of valuable minerals and elements like helium-3, platinum, and rare earth metals on the Moon and asteroids has created new economic and strategic opportunities.

Regardless, the legal and ethical frameworks for extraterrestrial mining remains unclear. While the Artemis Accords (2020) introduced by the U.S. promote peaceful cooperation, many nations, including Russia and China, criticize them for favoring signatories and bypassing UN-led regulations. This growing divide underlines the lack of an universal legal mechanism for managing space resources, creating potential for conflict, inequality, and even militarization of outer space.

Possible Solutions

Mandatory transparency: Ensure all states and companies share their planned missions and the impact data of their activities, which would be in collaboration with UNOOSA. This could be an important step for a proper way of extraterrestrial mining while also improving the trust between nations.

Establish a comprehensive global framework: Elaborate on the Outer Space Treaty and the Moon Agreement to clearly articulate rights of ownership, responsibility for liability, and obligations concerning environmental protection.

Global Benefit-Sharing Fund: A segment of the profits generated from mining activities in outer space could be allocated to a fund managed by the UN to aid sustainable development in less affluent nations. This guarantees that the advantages of “space wealth” are distributed for the benefit of all humanity.

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs): Recommends that EIA’s should be done before any mining activities. Governments must demonstrate that they will cause minimal disturbance to the extraterrestrial environment. An independent evaluation by scientific panels organized by UNOOSA is necessary.

Significant Nations

China: China improved its capabilities within the China National Space Administration (CNSA). With Chang'e Lunar Missions, China successfully landed on both near and far sides of the moon and collected samples. China announced long-term lunar base building plans, possibly mining helium-3, which is a rare isotope that could change clean energy. China's increasing presence in outer space raises geopolitical tensions, especially with the United States, since both countries compete for control over future space resources.

USA: The United States leads the way in space mining and exploration. Through NASA's Artemis Program, the U.S. plans to set up a lasting presence on the Moon to prepare for Mars exploration. Additionally, the Artemis Accords, signed by over 30 countries, encourage peaceful cooperation in space. They also allow private companies to be involved in resource extraction. In 2015, the U.S. passed the Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act, which gives private firms the rights to own resources they extract from celestial bodies. This move is controversial because it goes against the idea of shared ownership in the Outer Space Treaty of 1967.

Russian Federation: The Russian Federation has a strong role in international space matters, following in the footsteps of the Soviet Union's early achievements. While it mainly focuses on space exploration and satellite technology, Russia is cautious about unilateral moves like the Artemis Accords. Moscow backs the idea of "common heritage of mankind" and stresses the importance of shared governance through the United Nations. Russia's stance is crucial in stopping the militarization of space and keeping it a peaceful and cooperative area.

Significant Nations

Luxembourg: Despite being a small country, Luxembourg is a leader in regulating space mining. In 2017, it passed a national Space Resources Law. This law gives companies the rights to extract and own resources from space, while also promoting international cooperation. Luxembourg has become a center for private space mining firms and collaborates closely with the European Space Agency (ESA). Its forward-thinking approach shows how smaller countries can take the lead in space governance through innovation and diplomacy.

Japan: Japan, through its JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency), has been carrying out successful asteroid missions like Hayabusa and Hayabusa2. These missions returned samples from asteroids Itokawa and Ryugu. They provide important data about the potential for space mining and the technological challenges involved. Japan also takes part in the Artemis Program, focusing on transparency, sustainability, and peaceful exploration.

India: India has emerged as an important regional player in space exploration through the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). With missions such as Chandrayaan-3, which successfully landed on the Moon in 2023, India has demonstrated technological competence and cost-effective innovation. India advocates for equitable access to outer space resources, aligning with developing nations that seek inclusion in the space economy despite limited budgets.

Related Organisations

The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR): It is an autonomous institution within the United Nations that conducts independent research on pressing global challenges related to disarmament, arms control and international security.

The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA): UNOSSA works to help all countries, especially developing countries, access and leverage the benefits of space to accelerate sustainable development. The organization works toward this goal through a variety of activities that cover all aspects related to space, from space law to space applications.

Artemis Records: NASA, in coordination with the U.S. Department of State and seven other initial signatory nations, established the Artemis Accords in 2020. With many countries and private companies conducting missions and operations around the Moon, the Artemis Accords provide a common set of principles to enhance the governance of the civil exploration and use of outer space.

The International Institute of Space Law (IISL): The global association for space law with individual and institutional members from almost 50 countries. It engages in collaboration with international bodies and national institutions, supports scholarly research on legal and socio-political aspects of space activities, and facilitates dialogue among leading experts through conferences, colloquia, and the Manfred Lachs Moot Court Competition.

Resources

- https://www.un.org/en/peace-and-security/international-space-law-explained
- https://www.un.org/en/site-search?query=exterrial+space
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/395435098_Gauging_Justice_in_Outer_Space_Exploration_and_Use_for_All_Countries
- https://greydynamics.com/chinas-moon-strategy-redefining-space-leadership-and-global-influence/
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