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utilization of space resources.**

**Islamic Republic of Iran’s Perspective on “The Initial draft
set of recommended principles for space resource activities”**

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Islamic Republic of Iran's Perspective

on

“The Initial draft set of recommended principles for space resource activities”

by the Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Legal Aspects of Space Resource Activities (27 March 2025)

Introduction

Islamic Republic of Iran emphasizes that space resource activities should be conducted to **foster global peace and technological parity, preventing any form of monopolization** or discriminatory practices that may widen economic and scientific inequalities. Islamic Republic of Iran supports broad international collaboration among nations to ensure that all countries, irrespective of their economic or technological capacities, have a fair opportunity to participate in and benefit from space exploration and space resources.

The draft set of recommended **principles represents a commendable and timely effort by the Vice-Chair** to advance the responsible conduct of space resource activities. It reflects thoughtful engagement with diverse perspectives and demonstrates a clear commitment to promoting transparency, sustainability, and peaceful use of outer space. By offering a structured and pragmatic approach to emerging challenges, the draft provides a valuable foundation for moving toward a multilateral framework governing space resources and space resource activities.

One notable shortcoming of the current draft is the absence of a dedicated principle explicitly focused on international cooperation. While cooperative elements appear throughout the document, particularly in references to consultation, coordination, and mutual assistance, these are primarily framed in the context of interaction among States already capable of conducting space resource activities. However, the peaceful uses of outer space and international cooperation carry a distinct and more inclusive meaning. It refers to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries by promoting equitable access, knowledge-sharing, capacity-building, and the transfer of technology. In the specific context of space resource activities, this involves enabling all States, regardless of their current capabilities, to participate meaningfully in the exploration and peaceful use of outer space. The absence of such a principle risks overlooking one of the foundational values of space law and may hinder efforts to ensure that the benefits of space resource utilization are shared globally. Including a dedicated

principle on international cooperation would not only align with the spirit of the Outer Space Treaty but also strengthen the document's legitimacy and inclusiveness.

Part 1

preamble

Islamic Republic of Iran recognizes several commendable aspects of the preamble, including:

Commitment to Peaceful Purposes. The emphasis on conducting space exploration and resource activities exclusively for peaceful purposes aligns with Islamic Republic of Iran's long-standing position against the militarization of outer space.

Inclusivity and Equity. The preamble's affirmation that the benefits of space resource activities should extend to all States, irrespective of their economic or scientific development, resonates with Islamic Republic of Iran's advocacy for equitable access to outer space technologies and resources.

International Cooperation. The call to promote broad international cooperation highlights the vital role of collective efforts in addressing common challenges and advancing space activities for the benefit of all humankind. As previously noted, the reference to international cooperation in the preamble should be reflected in a standalone principle, on par with the other core principles, to ensure it receives the attention and operational clarity it deserves.

While Islamic Republic of Iran supports the objectives outlined in the preamble, it identifies several areas that require further refinement:

Lack of clarity on the nature of the document. The preamble currently lacks clarity on the nature of the document. While the Islamic Republic of Iran supports the eventual establishment of a binding agreement, we recognize that the present international environment may not yet support such a development. To balance long-term goals with current realities, the preamble should emphasize that these principles are foundational steps toward a more comprehensive governance framework for space resources. Adding language such as "building toward a more comprehensive framework over time" would reflect both the pragmatic context and the aspiration for future progress.

Ambiguity in Definitions: While we recognize the difficulty of defining “space resources” and “space resource activities,” some elements need to be addressed in the preambular section. The current focus on surface and subsurface resources of the Moon and other celestial bodies overlooks atmospheric resources on planets like Mars or moons like Titan, which hold value for fuel, life support, and industry. Similarly, omitting energy sources like solar energy and atmospheric gradients limits the scope of space resource activities. Addressing atmospheric and other overlooked resources would foster a more comprehensive and future-ready framework.

Equitable Sharing of Benefits: The preamble would benefit from language that acknowledges the potential risks of unequal access to space resources. Islamic Republic of Iran encourages the inclusion of provisions aimed at promoting the fair distribution of benefits derived from space resource activities, with particular attention to the needs and capacities of developing nations.

Principle 1: Compliance with International Law, Including International Space Law

Islamic Republic of Iran appreciates the emphasis on adherence to international law and the Charter of the United Nations. This reinforces the importance of maintaining peace, security, and international cooperation. The reference to the Outer Space Treaty as a cornerstone of the legal framework reflects a commitment to existing principles of equity and peaceful space exploration, which Islamic Republic of Iran has historically supported.

While the principle highlights compliance with international law, it does not address the potential gaps or ambiguities in the existing legal framework. Islamic Republic of Iran supports the development of mechanisms that help ensure space resource activities remain consistent with the evolving landscape of space exploration while upholding fairness and inclusivity. To strengthen the framework’s effectiveness, we also suggest considering the establishment of clear, cooperative guidelines for resolving potential disputes arising from differing interpretations.

Principle 2: Freedom of Access and Non-Appropriation

Islamic Republic of Iran endorses the reaffirmation of outer space as a domain free for exploration and use by all States, emphasizing the principle of non-appropriation. The

recognition of free access to celestial bodies aligns with Iran's stance on the equitable use of space resources.

However, the principle remains silent on ensuring that technologically advanced nations do not dominate or restrict access of all nations to space resources. Islamic Republic of Iran proposes clearer measures to guarantee fair and transparent practices, ensuring that no State or group of States imposes barriers to entry for others, particularly developing nations. Furthermore, mechanisms should be introduced to monitor and regulate activities to prevent indirect forms of appropriation through prolonged exclusive use or exploitation.

The distinction between “resources in situ” and their status post-extraction creates legal ambiguity. While the Outer Space Treaty prohibits national appropriation of celestial bodies, it is silent on ownership after extraction. Such a silence should be interpreted according to the fundamental principles of equitable benefit-sharing and common heritage. Islamic Republic of Iran could advocate for an international framework to govern post-extraction, requiring contributions to global benefit-sharing mechanisms. Models like the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea could inform such a framework. This approach would promote fairness, prevent monopolization, and ensure space resources benefit all humankind.

Principle 3: Peaceful Purposes

Islamic Republic of Iran fully supports the principle that space resource activities and the use of celestial bodies must serve exclusively peaceful purposes. This reflects Islamic Republic of Iran’s commitment to preventing the militarization of space and fostering an environment of trust and cooperation. However, the principle would benefit from greater clarity regarding how potential violations are addressed. Islamic Republic of Iran suggests exploring cooperative measures—such as transparency requirements, confidence-building mechanisms, and reporting obligations—to promote accountability and support compliance with peaceful objectives.

Principle 4: Safety

Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes the prioritization of human life and health in space resource activities. The commitment to assistance in emergencies reflects principles of humanity and international solidarity. This principle should also address the importance of safeguarding the

infrastructure that supports such activities. Habitats, vehicles, processing facilities, and energy systems are not only essential for mission success but also for protecting human life in extreme environments. Islamic Republic of Iran believes that States should take appropriate measures to ensure the safety, integrity, and resilience of space infrastructure, recognizing its vital role in sustaining human operations. However, the need to ensure infrastructure safety in space resource activities should not serve as a justification for establishing "safety zones" that risk facilitating de facto appropriation of space and its resources.

Principle 5: Sustainability and Protection of the Environment of Earth and Outer Space

Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes the principle's focus on sustainability, equitable access, and the preservation of the space environment for future generations. The inclusion of measures to avoid contamination and debris creation aligns with global interests in promoting manageable space activities. The emphasis on remediating affected areas is particularly commendable as it highlights the importance of accountability and restoration.

The principle currently lacks some key mechanisms for effective implementation, monitoring, and enforcement, which are necessary to turn its goals into tangible results. Islamic Republic of Iran proposes the creation of international reporting standards and impact assessment procedures to enhance transparency and accountability. Finally, the absence of provisions for cooperative environmental impact assessments could lead to some fragmented or overlapping activities on celestial bodies. To address this, Islamic Republic of Iran suggests introducing a framework for prior consultation and joint assessments to foster coordination and reduce cumulative environmental impacts.

Principle 6: Prioritization of Scientific Research and Investigation

Islamic Republic of Iran appreciates prioritizing scientific research as a fundamental goal of space resource activities. The emphasis on freedom of investigation and international cooperation reflects the commitment to advancing knowledge for the benefit of all humankind.

Despite its inclusive tone, the principle lacks detailed provisions to ensure that developing nations can participate in and benefit from scientific research. Islamic Republic of Iran advocates for a fair distribution of opportunities and resources to foster meaningful cooperation

among all States. Additionally, mechanisms should be established to ensure that scientific investigation remains transparent and accessible.

Principle 7: Sharing of Information and Data

Principle 7 sets a valuable foundation for promoting transparency and international cooperation in space resource activities. To support consistent implementation across States, the current language, such as “timely,” “relevant,” and “to the greatest extent feasible and “practicable,” needs greater precision. The principle focuses primarily on States, and remains silent on information gathered by non-governmental and private entities.

Ensuring broader access to shared data, particularly for developing countries, could further promote equity and inclusiveness. Introducing guidance on standardized reporting processes and data management frameworks may also improve the accessibility and usability of shared information. Finally, considering how to balance transparency with protecting sensitive information could strengthen the principle’s overall applicability. In this context the central role of COPUOS shall be fully taken into account. In this context, the central role of COPUOS in fostering information and data sharing, setting reporting standards, and facilitating equitable access to shared space data remains essential for ensuring transparency and equitable access to information and data while safeguarding legitimate security concerns.

Principle 8: Coordination, Cooperation, and Consultation

Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes the emphasis on coordination, mutual assistance, and transparency, which aligns with the broader objective of conducting space activities in a cooperative and inclusive manner. However, the principle would benefit from greater clarity regarding the mechanisms for addressing harmful interference or disputes. Islamic Republic of Iran recommends incorporating specific procedures for consultation and conflict resolution to ensure peaceful cooperation among nations. Furthermore, the principle should more actively promote capacity-building initiatives to broaden access and support for emerging space actors. In addition, while it recognizes the future involvement of currently non-capable States, a more explicit focus on inclusivity, through knowledge-sharing, training, or technical support, would help ensure equitable participation in space resource activities and reinforce the spirit of the Outer Space Treaty.

As previously noted, Islamic Republic of Iran believes that beyond these valuable provisions, there remains a clear need for a separate and independent principle on international cooperation. Such a new principle would address the distinct obligation to bridge the gap between developed and developing States in the peaceful use of outer space, including space resource activities.

Principle 9: International Responsibility for Activities of Non-Governmental Entities

Reflecting a fundamental obligation under Article VI of the Outer Space Treaty, Principle 9 addresses the responsibility of States for space resource activities conducted by non-governmental entities under their jurisdiction. Islamic Republic of Iran acknowledges and supports the principle that States are held internationally responsible for the activities of non-governmental entities in outer space. This commitment reinforces accountability and ensures that all space activities align with international law and the recommended principles. The inclusion of authorization mechanisms and continuous supervision is a positive step toward fostering accountability and mitigating potential risks posed by private entities in space.

However, to ensure comprehensiveness, the principle would benefit from further elaboration in several areas. First, it should clarify the mechanisms by which States authorize and continuously supervise such activities, including clear criteria for authorization and oversight procedures to ensure compliance with international space law. Additionally, while responsibility is mentioned, the principle should also address liability, specifying the conditions under which States are liable for damage caused by private actors and how such liability would be assessed and resolved. Lastly, transparency would be enhanced by encouraging States to publicly share information about authorized non-governmental entities and their activities, including maintaining registries and reporting incidents with potential international implications.

Principle 10: Review of Principles

Islamic Republic of Iran appreciates the principle's focus on adaptability and the need to review and revise these principles in light of technological advancements and new information. This approach ensures that the framework remains relevant and responsive to the dynamic nature of space exploration and resource activities.

However, the principle does not outline specific mechanisms for the review and amendment process, which could lead to inefficiency of the principles. Islamic Republic of Iran advocates for regular review intervals to ensure timely updates that reflect evolving challenges and opportunities in space resource activities.