

IISL/ECSL Space Law Symposium 2003: Reinforcing the Registration Convention

The annual IISL/ECSL space law symposium was held on the occasion of the 42nd Session of the Legal Subcommittee of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on Monday, 24 March 2003 in Vienna, Austria.

The symposium, held traditionally on the first day of the Legal Subcommittee's session, was well attended by delegates from many different countries. It was the first time that the symposium had not been organized by Dr Ernst Fasan (Austria), and in the opening words by the IISL Secretary on behalf of IISL President N. Jasentuliyana, he was warmly thanked for all his hard work to make the symposium into what it is today: an opportunity for delegates to hear about topical issues that might at some time require the attention of the Committee.

We were extremely pleased that Ambassador Peter Jankowitsch, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the Austrian Space Agency and Past Chair of COPUOS, had agreed to chair the Symposium. His able leadership greatly contributed to the success of the event. Cicero dos Santos of the UN Office of Outer Space Affairs served as rapporteur, and IISL Secretary Tanja Masson-Zwaan had coordinated the programme.

The topic this year, "Reinforcing the Registration Convention", had been chosen in view of many recent developments, such as in-orbit sale of satellites, deployment of large satellite constellations by private consortia, etc, which may require us to rethink some of the provisions of, or gaps left by, the 1976 Registration Convention. The speakers came from a variety of countries and backgrounds, including Europe, the USA, South America, as well as industry, academia and international organizations.

A general introduction about the "Background and Historical Context" was given by Dr. Frans von der Dunk, Co-Director of the International Institute of Air and Space Law at Leiden University, The Netherlands.

Then Mr. Kay-Uwe Hörl, Team Leader of the Commercial & Contracts, Navigation & Constellations Business Unit of Astrium, Germany spoke on the complicated topic of "Change of Ownership, Change of Registry?, Which Objects to Register, What Data to be Furnished, When, and Until When?".

Next, Prof. Sylvia Ospina, a Consultant in international Telecoms/Space Law from Colombia discussed the "UNIDROIT Registration of Security Interests & The Registration Convention: Compatible / Complementary, or Contradictory?".

An example of the "Practice of National States", in particular the USA was presented by Prof. Joanne Gabrynowicz, Director of the National Remote Sensing and Space Law Center in Mississippi, USA, while the "Practice of International Organisations" and in particular the European Space Agency was discussed extensively by Dr. Gabriel Lafferranderie, the Chairman of ECSL.

Several delegates raised questions during the discussion, which focussed in large part on Ms Ospina's proposal to include the WTO instead of COPUOS or OOSA in Unidroit's plans for a new registry with the aim of protecting space assets.

Prof. Vladimir Kopal, Chairman of the UNCOPUOS Legal Subcommittee, thanked IISL and ECSL for organizing the symposium, and gave some concluding remarks. It was especially rewarding for the organizers to hear him say that some of the suggestions made by the speakers might well be taken up by the Committee during the remainder of the session!

After this, Ambassador Jankowitsch closed the symposium and invited all participants to a cocktail, sponsored by the IISL and ECSL.

We hope that next year will see yet another successful symposium!

Tanja Masson-Zwaan
IISL Secretary /former ECSL Board Member