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**Committee on the Peaceful
Uses of Outer Space
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Information on the activities of international
intergovernmental and non-governmental
organizations relating to space law**

**Growth of Committee membership and universalisation
of the five United Nations treaties on space law**

Conference room paper by the Secure World Foundation

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Growth of Committee Membership and Universalisation of the Five United Nations Treaties on Space Law

Submitted by the Secure World Foundation

The past decade has seen a notable growth in membership to the various United Nations treaties on outer space, along with increasing membership of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (“the Committee”) now has one hundred and four (104) Member States, with Latvia and Djibouti as its newest members joining in 2024.¹

What are the implications of the growth of Committee membership for the universalization of the existing United Nations treaties on outer space? In terms of space law, one such implication deals with the list of States Parties to the various United Nations treaties. Figure 1 depicts the historical growth in ratification/accession/succession of the five United Nations treaties on outer space across the previous decades.

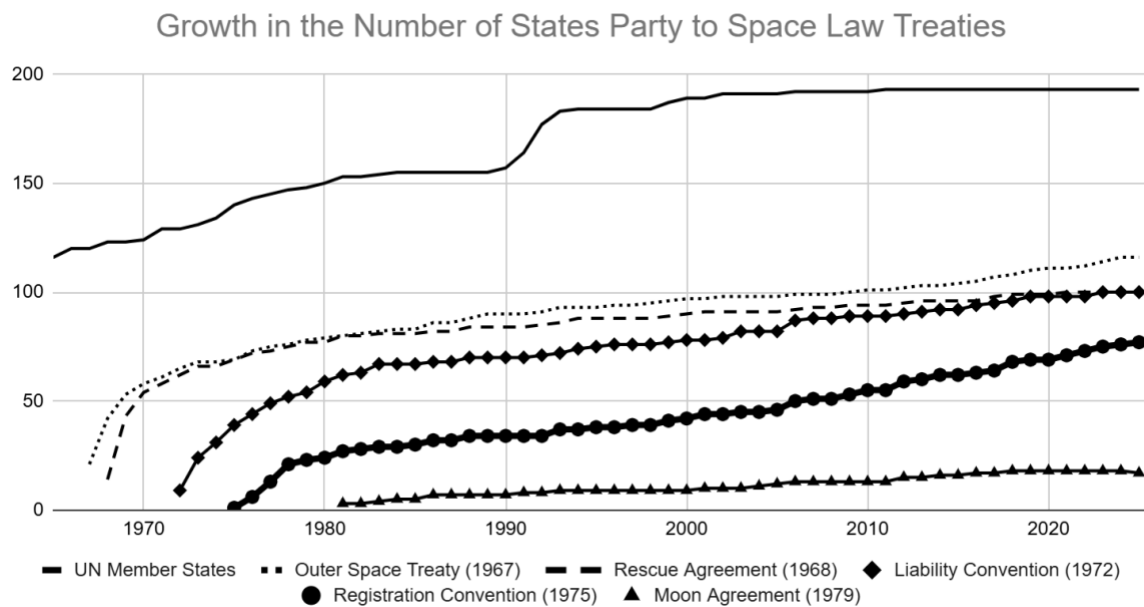


Fig. 1 – *Historical growth in the United Nations treaties on outer space.*

¹ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 79/519 and 79/519 A.

1 Committee Membership and States Parties to the 1967 Outer Space Treaty

As 1 January 2024, the Outer Space Treaty had one hundred and fourteen (114) States Parties, with an additional twenty-two (22) signatory States.² Subsequently, during the calendar year of 2024, both Colombia³ and Uzbekistan⁴ joined the States Parties to the Outer Space Treaty, bringing the updated total number to one hundred and sixteen (116) States Parties to the Outer Space Treaty.⁵ There is now significant overlap between the States which are both: a) party to the Outer Space Treaty, and b) members of the Committee.

COPUOS Membership vs. Outer Space Treaty

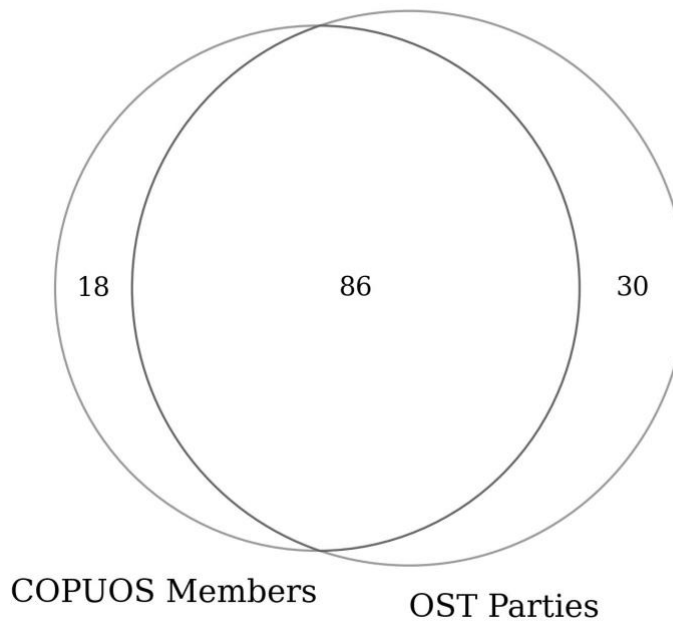


Fig. 2 – *Overlap of Committee Membership and States Parties to the Outer Space Treaty. The left circle represents the 104 State members of the Committee (18+86=104). The right circle represents the 116 States Parties of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty (86+30=116). The middle section represents the 86 states which are both a) members of the Committee and b) States Parties of the Outer Space Treaty.*

Figure 2 illustrates this overlap between membership in the Committee and membership in the State Parties to the Outer Space Treaty (OST). At present, there are eighty-six (86) States which are both a) Committee members, and b) party to the Outer Space Treaty. Eighteen (18) states are members of the Committee and are not parties to the Outer Space Treaty. There are thirty (30) States which are States Parties to the Outer Space Treaty that are not members of the Committee.

² Legal Subcommittee of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, *Status of International Agreements relating to activities in outer space as at 1 January 2024*, A/AC.105/C.2/2024/CRP.3* (15 Apr. 2024), https://www.unoosa.org/oosa/oosadoc/data/documents/2024/aac.105c.22024crp/aac.105c.22024crp.3_0.html

³ Colombia – Depository Notification, 15 Apr. 2024, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Space-Outer-Space-Treaty-Notification-of-Deposit-of-Instrument-Colombia-March-21-2024.pdf>

⁴ Uzbekistan – Depository Notification, 17 Oct. 2024, https://www.unoosa.org/documents/pdf/spacelaw/treatystatus/241127_Letter_from_PM_Russian_Federation_Uzbekistan.pdf

⁵ United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, *Status of International Agreements relating to Activities in Outer Space – Latest Depository Notifications*, <https://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/spacelaw/treaties/status/index.html> (last accessed 17 Feb. 2025).

1.1 Signatory States and Committee Membership

There are an additional twenty-one (21) states which have signed but not yet ratified the Outer Space Treaty.⁶ Of these twenty-one (21) OST signatory states, nine (9) are members of the Committee.⁷ Meanwhile, of these 21 OST signatory states, there remain twelve (12) states which are not members of the Committee.⁸

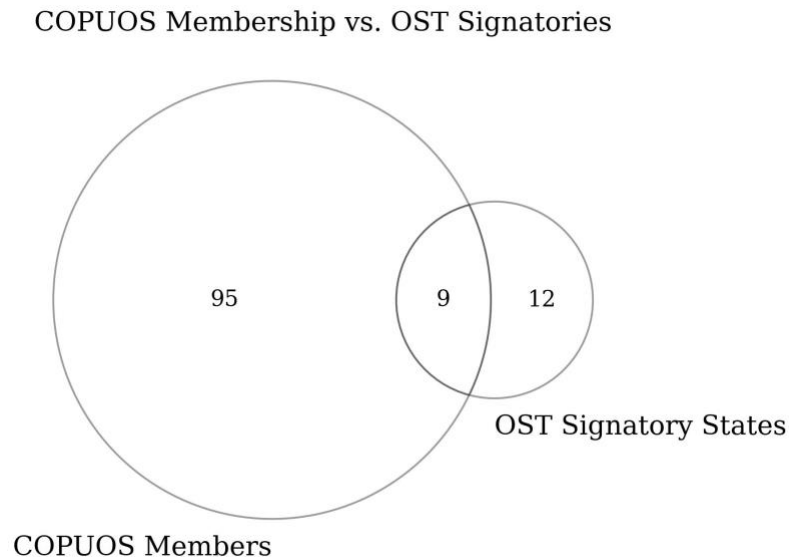


Fig. 3 – *Overlap of Committee Membership and Signatory Parties to the Outer Space Treaty. The left circle represents the 104 State members of the Committee (95 + 9 = 104). The right circle represents the 21 states which have signed but not yet ratified the 1967 Outer Space Treaty (9 + 12 = 21). Nine OST signatory states are members of the Committee, while twelve OST signatory states are not Committee members.*

Figure 3 illustrates this overlap between a) Committee membership and b) being a signatory which has not yet ratified, acceded, or succeeded to the Outer Space Treaty.

If all OST signatory states were to fully ratify the Outer Space Treaty and become States Party to that treaty, and become members of the Committee, the Committee would thereafter constitute 116 states ($104 + 12 = 116$). Fully ratifying the Outer Space Treaty would also increase the number of states party to that treaty from its current total of 116 to 137 states ($116 + 21 = 137$).

2 Astronaut Agreement and Liability Convention

A similar analysis is possible with the 1968 Astronaut Rescue and Return Agreement and the 1972 Liability Convention. The diagrams below illustrate the overlap between membership in the Committee and parties to these two treaties.

⁶ Bolivia, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, Haiti, Holy See, Honduras, Iran, Jordan, Lesotho, Malaysia, Philippines, Rwanda, Somalia, and Trinidad and Tobago are **states which have signed but not yet ratified the Outer Space Treaty**.

⁷ Bolivia, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Iran, Jordan, Malaysia, Philippines, and Rwanda have a) signed but not yet ratified the Outer Space Treaty; and b) are members of the Committee.

⁸ Botswana, Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gambia, Guyana, Haiti, Holy See, Honduras, Lesotho, Somalia, and Trinidad and Tobago have a) signed but not yet ratified the Outer Space Treaty, and b) are NOT members of this Committee.

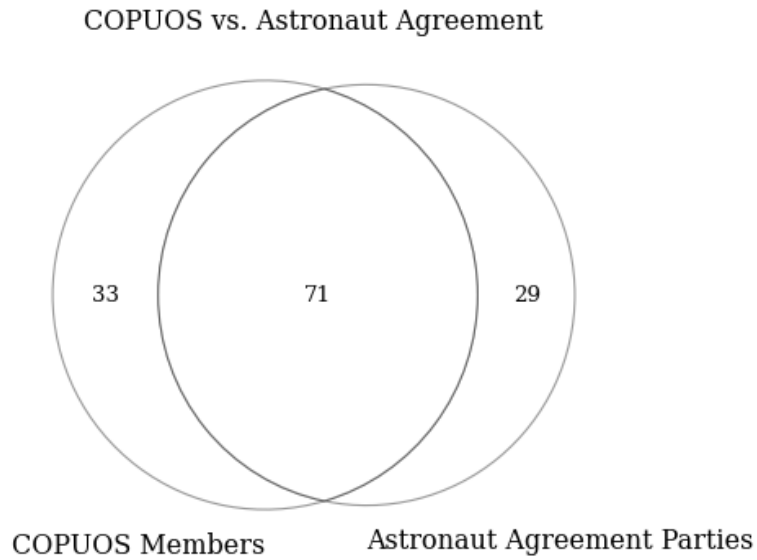


Fig. 4 – *Overlap of Committee Membership and States Parties to the Astronaut Rescue and Return Agreement. The left circle represents the 104 State members of the Committee (33 + 71 = 104). The right circle represents the 100 States Parties of the 1968 Astronaut Rescue and Return Agreement (71 + 29 = 100). The middle section represents the 71 states which are both a) members of the Committee and b) States Parties of the Astronaut Agreement.*

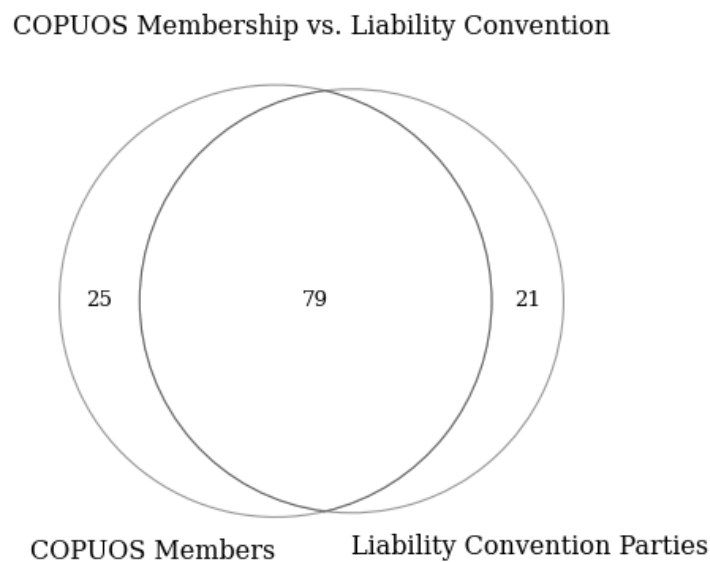


Fig. 5 – *Overlap of Committee Membership and States Parties to the Liability Convention. The left circle represents the 104 State members of the Committee (25 + 79 = 104). The right circle represents the 100 States Parties of the 1972 Liability Convention (79 + 21 = 100). The middle section represents the 79 states which are both a) members of the Committee and b) States Parties of the Liability Convention.*

3 Committee Membership and States Parties to the 1975 Registration Convention

A similar and perhaps more interesting analysis is possible for the 1975 Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space.⁹ With the most recent accessions in 2024 and 2025 to the Registration Convention by the Philippines¹⁰ and Ecuador,¹¹ there are now seventy-seven (76) States Parties to the Registration Convention, with an additional three (3) signatory States.

There is significant overlap between members of the Committee and States Parties to the Registration Convention. There are now sixty-eight (68) States which are Members of the Committee and are party to the Registration Convention. With an additional two Committee Members (Iran and Singapore) which have signed but not yet ratified the treaty, there are a total of seventy (70) States with Committee membership and obligations under the Registration Convention.

COPUOS Membership vs. Registration Convention

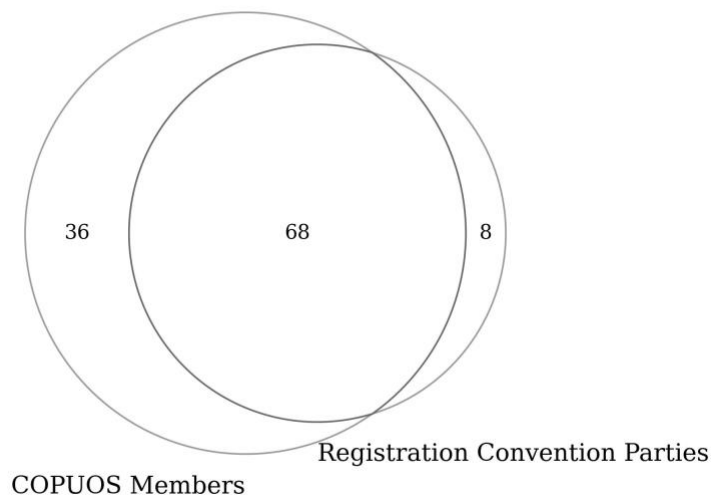


Fig. 6 – *Overlap of Committee Membership and the Registration Convention. The left circle represents the 104 State members of the Committee (36 + 68 = 104). The right circle represents the 76 States Parties of the 1972 Liability Convention (68 + 8 = 76). The middle section represents the 68 states which are both a) members of the Committee and b) States Parties of the Liability Convention.*

This is the closest overlap between Committee membership and a State's status as a State Party to one of the five United Nations Treaties on outer space. There are only eight (8) remaining States which are States Parties to the Registration Convention who have yet to join the Committee.¹² These states are: Antigua and Barbuda, Democratic Republic of Korea

⁹ Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space (1023 UNTS 15).

¹⁰ Philippines – Depository Notification, 14 May 2023, C.N.165.2024.TREATIES-XXIV.1, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/CN/2024/CN.165.2024-Eng.pdf>

¹¹ Ecuador – Depository Notification, 17 March 2025, C.N.138.2025.TREATIES-XXIV.1, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/CN/2025/CN.138.2025-Eng.pdf>

¹² Antigua and Barbuda, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Montenegro, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Serbia, and Seychelles.

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With the accelerating growth of this Committee, we may only be a few years away from a situation where all the States Parties to the Registration Convention are also Committee members. Those remaining nine (8) remaining States Parties to the Registration Convention may soon pursue Committee membership.

Every State Party of the Registration Convention meeting here at this Committee would be historically significant, and significant under the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties and the provisions it contains regarding subsequent agreements of the States Parties of a treaty.¹³

The 1975 Registration Convention is one of the most important treaties on outer space – requiring a national registry of space objects, and the international registration of a launching state’s launched space objects. Its provisions are significant mechanisms for enhancing transparency and confidence in, and about, space activities, which serve as public notice as to the extent and scope of a State’s national space activities. The Registration Convention also contains provisions regarding its amendment,¹⁴ and the process for calling for a review conference.¹⁵

¹³ Vienna Convention on The Law of Treaties (1155 UNTS 331) (1969), “Article 31 – *General rule of interpretation*. 3. There shall be taken into account, together with the context: (a) any subsequent agreement between the parties regarding the interpretation of the treaty or the application of its provisions;”.

¹⁴ “Article IX. Any State Party to this Convention may propose amendments to the Convention. Amendments shall enter into force for each State Party to the Convention accepting the amendments upon their acceptance by a majority of the States Parties to the Convention and thereafter for each remaining State Party to the Convention on the date of acceptance by it.” As of 2025, with a total of seventy-six (77) States Parties to the Registration Convention, a majority would therefore constitute thirty-eight (39) States parties to the Treaty.

¹⁵ “Article X. Ten years after the entry into force of this Convention, the question of the review of the Convention shall be included in the provisional agenda of the United Nations General Assembly in order to consider, in the light of past application of the Convention, whether it requires revision. However, at any time after the Convention has been in force for five years, at the request of one third of the States Parties to the Convention and with the concurrence of the majority of the States Parties, a conference of the States Parties shall be convened to review this Convention. Such review shall take into account in particular any relevant technological developments, including those relating to the identification of space objects.” With a total of seventy-six (76) States Parties to the Registration, a mere twenty-five (25) States Parties might request such a review conference.