Report of the International Workshop on

Space Policy and Roundtable on India Space Policy 2023



The Centre of Aviation and Space Laws (NUJS Kolkata) in collaboration with the Centre for Research in Air and Space Law (MNLU Mumbai) and the V.S. Mani Centre for Air and Space Law (GNLU Gujarat) has jointly hosted the International Workshop on Space Policy and Roundtable on Indian Space Policy 2023. This international event, which was held on 8 October 2023, witnessed the participation of academicians, space industry representatives, practitioners and researchers from different parts of the world. The central theme of this workshop involved a detailed analysis of the 2023 Indian Space Policy. The experts from different sectors gave their valuable opinion on various aspects of different space policies, more particularly that of India.

Mr. Adithya A. Variath, Coordinator of the CRASL, MNLU Mumbai, delivered the welcome address. This was followed by the launch of the inaugural issue of Indian Review of Air and Space Law, which is the flagship peer reviewed journal of the CRASL. The Advisory Board and the Editorial Board of this journal consist of established scholars from different parts of the world. The Centre dedicated the journal to Prof. (Dr.) Sandeepa Bhat B., Director of the CASL, as a token of appreciation for his continuous endeavour in aviation and space laws as well as assistance in the development of CRASL.

Following the journal launch, Prof. Bhat delivered the keynote address. In his speech, he explained the importance of organizing such events for the purpose of creating more awareness about space law and policy, and he also outlined vast career opportunities in this field. He emphasized the need of having a national space legislation by balancing international treaty obligations with that of facilitating the entry of private players in the space sector. After this, the special address was delivered by the guest speaker Ms. Jessica Los Banos, Faculty of Law, Universitas Pelita Harapan, Indonesia. She highlighted the need of cooperation among the South-Asian countries while carrying out various Space activities. Subsequently, a detailed yet succinct presidential address was delivered by Prof. (Dr.) Dilip Ukey, Vice-Chancellor of MNLU, Mumbai. Emphasis was given on the issues like entry of private players in the space market and how a more balanced regime can be achieved through policy deliberation. The inaugural session ended with the chief guest's address delivered by Honourable Justice Ujjal Bhuyan in which he stressed on ensuring more integrity and cooperation among the nations while carrying out space activities. Mr. Amana Khare, Assistant Professor at MNLU Mumbai, concluded the inaugural session by delivering a warm vote of thanks.

The technical sessions of this workshop started with the round table on Indian Space Policy 2023, which was moderated by Mr. Adithya A. Variath. Prof. (Dr.) Gurbachan Sachdeva, Professor of Law, NASLAR University Hyderabad, was the first speaker in this round table. He discussed very precisely about the achievements of India so far, and he was of the view that the Space Policy of 2023 can become a very effective base for the future development of national space legislation. This was followed by Prof. (Dr.) Sandeepa Bhat expressing his critique on the Indian Space Policy. How several aspects of Indian Space Policy are based on incorrect standpoints and how the absence of a legislative backing makes the Policy bad in the eyes of law are highlighted by him. Mr. Kiran Mohan Vazhapully, Senior Legal Officer, Asian-African Legal Consultative Organisation, was the next to express his views. He analysed the incorrect approach of the Space Policy from the perspective of the non-appropriation principle enshrined under the Outer Space Treaty. Dr. Benarji Chakka, Dean and Professor, VIT AP, School of Law, was the last resource person who enlightened the attendees on two major aspects of the Indian Space Policy– commercialization and collaboration with international actors.

After the opening remarks by resource persons, the roundtable panellists expressed their views. Dr. Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, Director, Centre for Security, Strategy &

Technology (CSST), Observer Research Foundation, criticized the Indian Space Policy from the security related aspects as well as the role of private sector in India's commercial space programme. Prof. (Dr.) Sudharshan Kumar, Dean, Department of Aerospace Engineering, IIT Bombay, discussed about the challenges for implementation of the Policy and steps to be taken by India in relation to debris mitigation, cost of launching etc. Ms. Gitanjali R. Kamat talked about sustainability and also expressed her concern about guidelines and procedures to be followed in future by the IN-SPACe. Mr. Rishiraj Baruah, Senior Associate, AZB & Partners, emphasized the need of reinterpretation of the international space treaties to promote private sector in space. Mr. Syed Tamjeed Ahmed, Co-Managing Partner of Spaviatech Law, expressed his concern about the absence of certainty in the policy. Dr. Aruna Kammila, Associate Professor, ICFAI Law School, ICFAI University, presented her view about debris mitigation and the position of the Space Policy in this regard. Prof. Divya Tyagi, Head of VS Mani Centre for Air and Space Law, GNLU Gujarat and Dr. Deva Prasad M., Associate Professor, IIM Kozhikode, highlighted the need of having legislative backing to the policy to protect the stakeholders.

The parallel technical sessions were the last part of the event where experts in different aspects of space law and policy presented many insightful papers and exchanged knowledge with each other. These sessions witnessed discussions on Space Policy of Indonesia, space policies and peaceful uses, commercial aspects of outer space, asteroid mining, Artemis Accords, space sustainability, environmental impacts of space activities, debris mitigation strategy etc..

All sessions of the workshop were successful in providing an in-depth understanding of specific nuances of space law and policy, the customary law and their relationship with the national space policy. The round table on Indian Space Policy 2023 provided a unique insight to all resource persons and participants. It has influenced as a platform of reflective thinking for many, which is expected to culminate in several academic writings and policy changes in the near future. Other technical sessions were equally effective with several scholars outlining their standpoints and answering the queries posed by participants. The workshop witnessed participation of more than 150 participants.