

IAF EARTH OBSERVATION SYMPOSIUM (B1)
21st Anniversary of the Disaster Charter: History, Status and Future of this Powerful and Productive
International Cooperation (6)

Author: Ms. Dimitra Stefoudi
Leiden University, The Netherlands, d.stefoudi@law.leidenuniv.nl

TWO DECADES OF THE DISASTER CHARTER: REFLECTING ON RELEVANT LEGAL ISSUES
AND POLICIES FOR THE FUTURE

Abstract

From a legal perspective, the International Charter Space and Major Disasters is a prominent example of a successful data policy. It enables the sharing of benefits from space activities, one of the main principles of international space law, and emphasizes in general the benefits from use of space technology for civil purposes. It also reflects the provisions of the UN Remote Sensing Principles that encourage States to share remote sensing data for the purpose of preventing and mitigating the impact of environmental phenomena and natural disasters. The Charter manages to strike a balance between the need for open access to data and the interests of the entities that supply these data. On the one hand, the availability of the mechanisms of the Charter enables its members to benefit from access to data from a wide range of satellite missions. On the other hand, the partners of the Charter offer their services on a voluntary basis, without commitment and free from liability. This paper will discuss the changes in the regulatory landscape concerning Earth Observation in the two decades since the introduction of the Charter. In particular, it will attempt a critical analysis of its data policy, especially with regard to the role of commercial satellite system operators. It will also compare it with other civil Earth Observation data policies and suggest ways in which the content of the Charter could be improved and function as basis for future cooperation in Earth Observation and for further use of space technology applications.