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FROM CHUQUICAMATA TO NEREUS: A CONTRIBUTION OF CHILEAN LEGISLATION TO
INTERNATIONAL LAWS ON SPACE MINING.

Abstract

For thousands of years, humans have been working in the development of different techniques and technology to access a variety of natural resources and minerals on the surface of Earth. Nevertheless, as Konstantin Tsiolkovsky once stated, “Earth is the cradle of humanity, but one cannot live in a cradle forever”. Since space exploration became a tangible reality to humankind, we have been able to launch space objects to the outermost atmospheric layers of Earth, and beyond. At this point, it is only natural that humans are driven to break the next frontier and master other space activities such as space mining. In this context countries like Chile, due to its geographical advantages, have been able to position themselves as leading experts in mining, constantly searching for innovation, resolving challenges and becoming forefront leaders in this sector. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to analyze the potential of Chilean legislation to contribute to international laws on space mining. Although this will be reviewed from a legal point of view, this paper will also consider at the same time some of the ethical challenges revolving this topic. From Chuquicamata, the largest copper open pit mine in the world, Chile and other nations will be able to test, develop, export and expand on mining technology from Earth to space, in a legal framework made from and for developing and developed nations.