

**Report of the CASL Workshop on
PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE**

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The Centre for Aviation and Space Laws (CASL), West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences (WBNUJS), Kolkata organised the Workshop on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on 6th October, 2021. The CASL carries the mandate of exploring, analysing and critically evaluating the legal developments in aviation, space and allied industries to lead the way forward. The conference marked the participation of esteemed resource persons from international and national arenas, including academicians, scholars, space law practitioners as well as students. The goal of the workshop was to inform participants about the contemporary issues prevalent in the legal forum with respect to Outer Space and find solutions pertinent to such discussions.

The conference started with Dr. Shouvik Kumar Guha, Associate Director of CASL, delivering the welcoming speech, wherein he greeted all the resource persons and participants in the workshop and introduced the possibilities inherent in charting out a roadmap for peaceful usage of the outer space by humankind for the present and future. This was followed by the inaugural address delivered by the Director of CASL, Prof. (Dr.) Sandeepa Bhat B., the resident expert on aviation and space law at WBNUJS. Through his presentation wherein he primarily sought to unfold the Limitations of Article IV of the Outer Space Treaty that ensures peaceful uses of the Outer Space Treaty, Professor Bhat also highlighted the issue that owing to the lack of consistent definitions used throughout Article IV of the Treaty, multiple interpretations are now cropping up to suit individual interests, which in turn give rise to considerable ambiguity.

The inaugural session was succeeded by a presentation made by Bruce K. Gagnon, Coordinator of the Global Network against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space. Throughout the course of the presentation, Mr. Gagnon relied upon the various illustrative examples to enlighten the audience about the implications (including the adverse fallout) of the use of nuclear power in outer space. He also briefly touched upon past events of accidents owing to the wrongful usage of nuclear power in space. The most enlightening part of his presentation included a comprehensive historical account of the space war ranging from World War II to the 2020 vision. He also added how scientists are afraid of possible collision between the space debris and existing satellites, and that despite efforts from multiple organisations to find ways to eliminate such debris, so far nothing of consequence has been developed. Mr. Gagnon concluded by emphasizing that while several rocket/satellite builders are currently attempting to build smaller space devices in hopes of reducing debris, any anti-satellite (ASAT) test and any possible future war in space are bound to aggravate the problem further.

The next address was delivered by Professor Dave Webb, Convener of The Global Network against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space. Professor Dave's presentation for the most part revolved around the theme of space-based technologies and the environment. He focused on how such technologies could be helpful in the mitigation of the effects of climate change, and according the necessary protection to living beings as well as to the stratospheric zone layer. He relied on various work reports, studies by academicians and news items to bolster his position. He also highlighted how parts of the space rocket and rocket prepollents can

affect the various atmospheric layers such as the exosphere, thermosphere, mesosphere, stratosphere and troposphere.

Next in line was the presentation from Dr. Aruna Kammila, Associate Professor at the Galgotias University. Her address was focused on the topic of demilitarisation of the outer space. She argued about the aspect of how the unchecked and unregulated weaponisation and militarisation of space pose a serious threat not only to the international peace, by fomenting suspicion and mistrust amongst the States, but also to critical civilian infrastructure essential for communication, navigation and broadcasting that are dependent upon satellites in the outer space.

The last address was delivered by Prof. Subrata Ghoshroy, Research Affiliate with the Program in Science, Technology, and Society, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA and Visiting Professor, Tokyo Institute of Technology. The topic of this presentation was the actual and potential harm that the US Missile Defense and Space Policy poses to the global strategic stability. The presentation was a detailed and enriching one in terms of critically analysing the US space policy and decoding the multiple ways in which the policy may cause aforementioned threat. Professor Ghoshroy primarily focused on space security in particular and global security on a larger scale.

After the successful completion of all the addresses, a dedicated Q&A session was held to answer multiple queries from the audience. Instance may be cited of the query whether the establishment of the US army constitutes an ipso facto violation of the Outer Space Treaty. The panel of experts unanimously responded that the political narrative and statements made by the establishment could set a dangerous precedent capable of provoking and promoting the establishment of similar forces across jurisdictions. Finally, the event was concluded with Dr. Shouvik Kumar Guha delivering the vote of thanks to all the participants and resource persons on behalf of CASL.

Overall, the workshop as the third event organised by the CASL in the calendar year, was quite successful in reaching out to and involving various stakeholders, including academics and space law enthusiasts. The issues addressed in the workshop were considered by the participants to be thought-provoking and enlightening and they agreed in general that the workshop had succeeded in making a rich contribution to the existing thematic debates and policy-framing in the context of peaceful use of the outer space.