

publicly accessible. The Convention also provides a uniform format for information furnished by launching states.

The Treaty is based on the voluntary system established by General Assembly Resolution 1721 of 1961.⁴⁰ Under the voluntary system there was, however, no delineation of what details should be provided. Consequently, the information furnished by countries was not uniform and was not reported promptly and on a regular basis.

The Registration Convention is a reflection of the general principles established by the Outer Space Treaty and elaborated through the Rescue Agreement and Liability Convention. While the other treaties do not refer to a central registry system, the Outer Space Treaty does contemplate national registries.⁴¹

Three reasons have been posited for the establishment of a central registry: effective management of traffic, enforcement of safety standards, and imputation of liability for damage.⁴² While the central registry is the most significant feature of the Treaty, it fulfills several other important objectives. Launching countries must maintain a national registry (Article II). Article IV of the Registration Convention requires mandatory reporting to the Secretary-General of the United Nations of information on a number of data, such as the date and location of the launch, changes in orbital parameters after the launch, and the recovery date of the spacecraft. States are not obliged to disclose the specific function of the satellite, but only the "general function of the space objects" (Article 1(e)). Furthermore, the Registration Convention does not require a launching state to provide appropriate identification markings for its spacecraft and its component parts.⁴³

It is worthy of note that, notwithstanding the fact that over half of the satellites launched serve military purposes,⁴⁴ not one of the launchings registered has ever been described as having a military function.

xvi) Environmental Modification Convention (1977)

The Environmental Modification Convention⁴⁵ as its title suggests aims at prohibiting the hostile use of potentially disastrous environmental modification techniques. This Convention is relevant to outer space