

“NGOs in Space Security: reasons for engagement”

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The Simons Foundation has been “present at the creation” of this annual space security conference and has sustained its support through prosperous and lean years. This is a credit to Dr. Jennifer Simons far-sightedness and her commitment to seeking solutions to the international security problems we face.

In my view, The Simons Foundation has been concerned with space security for three key reasons which I will enumerate below:

Recognition that the world has become dependent on the “peaceful uses of outer space” and that despite the Outer Space Treaty’s espousal of that goal there are still threats to this condition that need to be countered. Civil society has a stake in maintaining a benign environment in outer space and the Foundation, within its means, wanted to defend that stake.

Complementarity with other aspects of the international security situation. In particular the engagement in space security also reflected the Foundation’s engagement on behalf of nuclear arms control and disarmament and that military developments in space could either help or hinder progress on the nuclear arms control and disarmament front.

The potential for successful advocacy. The Foundation saw a potential to influence governmental thinking and policy on the space security file in a positive direction. There was reason to hope that advocacy of cooperative security approaches and measures of prevention and restraint could have some impact on state behaviour. Part of this hope was grounded in the fact that states had already demonstrated, notably through the Outer Space Treaty, a willingness to treat outer space in a special fashion – as a ‘global commons’ with strict limits on national usage. In this way the space security file appeared to enjoy some take up and the Foundation, in concert with likeminded non-state actors, could believe that states could be persuaded to take the additional steps to safeguard this special status for space and fulfill its promise.

Accordingly, in my opinion, these factors have provided the primary motivation for the sustained support The Simons Foundation has provided to the UNIDIR Space Security Conference as well as to another significant space-related project. This is the *Space Security Index*, an annual publication that surveys developments in the civilian, military and commercial uses of space and assesses their implications for outer space security.