



AVIATION &
SPACE LAWS
COMMITTEE



CHRIST
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)
BANGALORE | DELHI NCR | PUNE

AVIATION AND SPACE LAW COMMITTEE

PRESENTS

LEX ASTRA

TREATY DRAFTING COMPETITION

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ABOUT CHRIST (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), BANGALORE

CHRIST (Deemed to be University) was established in 1969, born out of the educational vision of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, a 19th-century social reformer and founder of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI). The institution has achieved greater heights since the 1990s through innovative curriculum, academic discipline, and holistic education, supported by a dedicated faculty. Recognized as a Deemed to be University in 2008, CHRIST is accredited with an 'A+' Grade by NAAC and was ranked 67th in the NIRF India Ranking 2023. It offers diverse programs across humanities, sciences, commerce, engineering, law, and more to around 30,000 students across its campuses in Bangalore, Pune, and Delhi NCR.

SCHOOL OF LAW, CHRIST (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

Located in the beautiful expansive central campus of CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bangalore, School of Law offers comprehensive Undergraduate, Postgraduate, and Doctoral programs, all aligned with the Bar Council of India and University Grants Commission standards. With a flexible curriculum tailored to the demands of the legal profession and academia, School of Law provides numerous specializations and value-added courses. Students benefit from internships, clinical programs, and research opportunities, and they engage regularly with legal professionals through seminars, guest lectures, and workshops. Renowned for its strong faculty-student ratio and one of the best law libraries in India, School of Law promotes a dynamic, interdisciplinary learning environment. Students also have opportunities for international internships, interaction with foreign faculty, and hands-on social responsibility experiences through village visits and NGO work.



ABOUT THE AVIATION AND SPACE LAWS COMMITTEE

The Aviation and Space Laws Committee at the School of Law, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), serves as a pioneering academic initiative designed to delve into the multifaceted legal landscape governing aviation and space activities. In a rapidly advancing era where both industries are witnessing unprecedented growth and innovation, the committee provides a dynamic and forward-thinking platform for students to explore and engage with the evolving challenges and opportunities in this niche area of law. The committee's core mission is to foster academic inquiry and professional skill development in Air and Space Laws by bridging the gap between theoretical legal principles and their practical application in the aviation and space industries. Recognizing the increasing importance of this field, the committee actively organizes events and initiatives that spark curiosity, encourage debate, and cultivate a deeper understanding of the subject among students. The committee's initiatives contribute to the development of essential skills such as research, critical analysis, communication, and problem-solving, highly valuable in any legal career. By continuously exploring new avenues for engagement and expanding its reach, the Air and Space Law Committee further aims to solidify its position as a leading center for the study and advancement of this critical area of law.



CODE OF CONDUCT

1. PREAMBLE

This document shall hereinafter be known as the Lex Astra Code of Conduct, 2026–27 (hereinafter referred to as the “Code”). The Code shall constitute a binding and authoritative framework governing the conduct, participation, and procedural discipline of all individuals and teams participating in Lex Astra.

The provisions of this Code shall be mandatory and enforceable upon all participants, organisers, and associated persons. The Code is intended to ensure fairness, academic integrity, and the orderly conduct of the Simulation.

2. GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

- Participants shall comply with:
- The rules of the simulation,
- Instructions given by the Organising Committee,
- Directions given by judges, moderators, or facilitators.
- Professionalism and respect must be maintained at all times, irrespective of competitive pressures.

3. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND HONESTY

- Fabrication of sources, or misrepresentation of legal authorities is strictly prohibited.
- Participants shall not impersonate real individuals/ stakeholders or falsely attribute statements, policies, or legal positions to institutions beyond reasonable simulation assumptions.
- Any attempt to gain an unfair competitive advantage to other team-members will result in immediate disqualification.

4. SIMULATION ETHICS

- Participants must strictly adhere to the stakeholder role chosen by them.
- Arguments and conduct must align with the institutional mandate, jurisdiction, and authority of the represented stakeholder.
- Participants shall not act in bad faith or disrupt proceedings.
- Manipulation of facts beyond the given scenario or counterfactual assumptions is prohibited unless explicitly permitted.

5. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND DECORUM

- Disrespectful, aggressive, intimidating, or abusive behaviour to other teams will not be tolerated.
- Participants must:
- Address judges and organisers respectfully,
- Allow opposing teams and stakeholders to present without interruption,
- Refrain from personal attacks or derogatory remarks.
- Discrimination or harassment based on gender, religion, caste, nationality, disability, or any other protected characteristic is strictly prohibited.

6. COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

- All communication during the simulation shall be professional, relevant, and respectful.
- Use of offensive or inappropriate language is prohibited.

7. COMPLIANCE WITH TIME AND PROCEDURE

- Participants must strictly adhere to:
 - i. Time limits,
 - ii. Submission deadlines,
 - iii. Procedural formats prescribed for each round.
- Late submissions or procedural violations may attract penalties or disqualification at the discretion of the Organising Committee.
- Teams must be present and prepared at all designated times; absence without prior approval may result in forfeiture.

8. USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES AND MATERIALS

- Use of electronic devices is permitted only for research and reference, unless otherwise restricted.
- Any confidential materials must not be shared outside the event.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY AND NON-DISCLOSURE

- Scenario materials, factual updates, counterfactual assumptions, and judges' feedback are confidential.
- Participants shall not disclose simulation content to non-participants before or during the event.
- Breach of confidentiality will attract strict disciplinary action.



10. INTERACTION WITH JUDGES AND ORGANISERS

- Decisions of the judges and Organising Committee are final and binding.
- Participants shall not:
 - Attempt to influence judges,
 - Seek feedback during live rounds unless permitted,
 - Engage in ex parte communication.
- Any grievance must be routed formally through the Organising Committee.

11. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

- Violation of this Code may result in one or more of the following actions:
 - Deduction of marks,
 - Disqualification from the round or entire event,
 - The nature of the penalty shall depend on the gravity and intent of the violation.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

GLOBAL CONTEXT OF ORBITAL GOVERNANCE

Outer space has become indispensable to modern society. Satellite systems support communication, navigation, banking, weather forecasting, disaster management, scientific research, defence, and global internet connectivity. As governmental agencies and private corporations continue expanding their activities beyond Earth, orbital regions surrounding the planet have become increasingly congested.

Low Earth Orbit (LEO), extending approximately 160 to 2,000 kilometres above Earth's surface, accommodates the majority of operational satellites due to its accessibility and comparatively lower launch costs. However, alongside operational spacecraft exists a growing population of defunct satellites, spent rocket stages, mission-related objects, and collision fragments collectively referred to as space debris. Travelling at speeds exceeding 27,000 kilometres per hour, even a fragment only a few centimetres wide possesses sufficient kinetic energy to disable operational spacecraft or threaten crewed missions.

The rapid commercialization of outer space has transformed the nature of space activities. A single satellite mission may involve a private corporation incorporated in one State, manufacturing facilities located in another, launch services provided by a third State, insurance from multinational companies, and users spread across every continent. Consequently, a single orbital incident today may generate legal consequences across multiple jurisdictions and affect governmental, commercial, and civilian interests simultaneously.

Although international space law establishes foundational principles governing the exploration and use of outer space, existing treaties were negotiated during an era when governmental agencies conducted relatively few missions and commercial satellite constellations did not exist. While several international guidelines encourage responsible debris mitigation, no comprehensive and legally binding framework presently regulates orbital traffic management, mandatory debris removal, commercial satellite constellations, end-of-life disposal, or coordinated emergency response following large-scale debris incidents.

Against this background, the following events prompted renewed calls for a comprehensive international treaty governing the sustainable use of Earth's orbit.

PRINCIPAL ACTORS

The Federation of Meridian

The Federation of Meridian is one of the world's leading space powers and possesses the largest commercial aerospace industry. Numerous multinational corporations headquartered within Meridian design, manufacture, and operate satellite constellations providing communication, navigation, and internet services worldwide.

The Republic of Aryavarta

The Republic of Aryavarta has become one of the world's most reliable commercial launch providers. Through affordable launch services and an expanding national space programme, Aryavarta regularly deploys satellites on behalf of governments, research institutions, and private corporations across the globe.

The People's Republic of Zhenxia

The People's Republic of Zhenxia maintains an extensive civilian and military satellite network supporting communication, surveillance, navigation, and national defence. It continues to expand its strategic presence in outer space through significant public investment.

The Federal Union of Nordovia

The Federal Union of Nordovia inherited one of the world's earliest space programmes. Although many of its satellites remain operational, a considerable number of earlier-generation satellites continue to occupy orbit long after completing their intended missions.

The State of Hinomori

The State of Hinomori is internationally recognised for manufacturing advanced spacecraft and satellite technologies. Although it conducts comparatively fewer launches, it supplies sophisticated satellite systems to governmental and commercial operators worldwide.

The United Emirates of Al Noor

The United Emirates of Al Noor relies extensively upon satellite communication, navigation, and Earth observation systems to support aviation, finance, logistics, and public infrastructure.

The Kingdom of Hollandria

The Kingdom of Hollandria depends heavily upon satellite-assisted maritime trade, offshore renewable energy, precision agriculture, and scientific research

FACTUAL SCENARIO

In March 2026, Orbital Nexus Corporation, a private aerospace company incorporated in the Federation of Meridian, completed the deployment of the AetherLink Constellation, comprising approximately 4,500 communication satellites intended to provide global broadband connectivity.

The constellation was launched over several missions by the Republic of Aryavarta under a commercial launch agreement. Following deployment, the satellites entered operational service in Low Earth Orbit after obtaining all necessary domestic authorizations and registrations required under applicable international law.

On 14 September 2026, one AetherLink satellite experienced an unexpected propulsion failure caused by a software malfunction. Despite repeated efforts by Orbital Nexus engineers, the satellite became incapable of executing collision-avoidance manoeuvres or its scheduled de-orbit sequence.

Three days later, the uncontrolled satellite collided with Sentinel-4, a retired military reconnaissance satellite jointly operated by the People's Republic of Zhenxia and the Federal Union of Nordovia. Sentinel-4 had originally been designed and manufactured by the State of Hinomori nearly twenty-five years earlier under an international defence procurement programme. Although the satellite had ceased functioning years earlier, it remained in orbit because no international legal obligation required its removal after the completion of its mission.

The collision generated more than 30,000 trackable debris fragments and hundreds of thousands of smaller fragments dispersed across several heavily utilized orbital corridors.

Within hours, space agencies and commercial operators around the world issued emergency collision warnings. Numerous satellites were required to perform unplanned avoidance manoeuvres, while several scheduled launches were postponed pending updated orbital risk assessments.

Two days later, the International Orbital Research Station (IORS), jointly operated by astronauts from twelve States, was forced to undertake an emergency orbital manoeuvre after debris fragments passed within dangerous proximity of the station. Scientific experiments were suspended, one planned cargo mission was delayed indefinitely, and international concern regarding the safety of crewed missions intensified.

The incident also disrupted critical satellite infrastructure. Temporary interruptions were reported in communication networks, navigation services, weather observation systems, and disaster-monitoring satellites relied upon by multiple States.



Over the following weeks, several large debris fragments survived atmospheric re-entry. One fragment struck the outskirts of a satellite communication facility in the United Emirates of Al Noor, damaging emergency communication infrastructure, disrupting regional internet connectivity, and temporarily affecting aviation navigation systems. Several civilians sustained injuries, while public and private property suffered substantial damage.

Another fragment landed near an offshore renewable energy installation in the Kingdom of Hollandria, damaging maritime monitoring equipment and forcing authorities to suspend shipping operations within the surrounding area until safety inspections could be completed.

Although investigations confirmed that the debris originated from the AetherLink-Sentinel-4 collision, uncertainty quickly emerged regarding the allocation of international responsibility.

Meridian argued that Orbital Nexus had complied with all existing legal requirements governing satellite operations and that the incident resulted from an unforeseeable technical malfunction. Aryavarta maintained that its responsibilities as the launching State had been fulfilled once the satellites had been successfully deployed in orbit.

Meanwhile, Zhenxia and Nordovia rejected allegations that the continued presence of Sentinel-4 contributed to the incident, emphasizing that no binding international rule required the removal of inactive satellites. Hinomori similarly denied responsibility, arguing that it had merely manufactured the satellite decades earlier and exercised no ownership or operational control thereafter.

As diplomatic discussions intensified, Al Noor and Hollandria demanded compensation for damage caused within their territories, while several other States expressed concern that similar debris could threaten civilian populations elsewhere.

Commercial satellite operators warned that increasing orbital congestion and legal uncertainty had significantly elevated operational risks. Several multinational insurers announced substantial increases in insurance premiums for Low Earth Orbit missions, while others temporarily suspended coverage for satellites operating within the affected orbital region.



Developing States participating in international space cooperation initiatives further argued that they had contributed minimally to orbital congestion but would bear disproportionate consequences if increasingly hazardous orbital conditions restricted future access to space.

The crisis deepened when the Commonwealth of Borealis, a coalition of technologically advanced spacefaring nations, announced Operation Clear Sky, an emergency Active Debris Removal mission intended to capture and safely de-orbit several large debris fragments identified as posing immediate threats to operational satellites and future crewed missions.

Meridian objected, arguing that debris originating from the AetherLink constellation remained subject to its jurisdiction through Orbital Nexus Corporation. Zhenxia and Nordovia similarly maintained that fragments originating from Sentinel-4 continued to form part of a registered military space object and could not be removed without their prior consent.

Borealis responded that delaying debris removal pending diplomatic negotiations would unnecessarily endanger human life, commercial infrastructure, and the long-term sustainability of Earth's orbital environment.

The incident generated widespread international debate concerning ownership of space debris, responsibilities of private operators, obligations of launching States, active debris removal, orbital traffic management, liability for terrestrial damage, protection of civilians, commercial sustainability, and the future governance of increasingly congested orbital environments

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Recognizing that the AetherLink Incident had exposed significant gaps within the existing international legal framework governing outer space activities, the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS), in consultation with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), convened an Extraordinary Diplomatic Conference on Orbital Governance.

Representatives of Member States, international organizations, commercial satellite operators, insurers, scientific institutions, and civil society organizations unanimously acknowledged that contemporary space activities had evolved far beyond the regulatory framework established during the early decades of the Space Age.

Accordingly, participating States resolved to negotiate a comprehensive multilateral treaty establishing an international legal framework governing orbital sustainability, space debris management, commercial space operations, active debris removal, international cooperation, and the peaceful, safe, and sustainable use of outer space for present and future generations.

NOTE TO PARTICIPANTS

Teams are required to prepare a comprehensive multilateral treaty establishing an international legal framework governing orbital sustainability and space debris management.

While drafting the treaty, teams may rely upon existing principles reflected in international space law, including the Outer Space Treaty (1967), the Rescue Agreement (1968), the Liability Convention (1972), the Registration Convention (1975), the Moon Agreement (1979), relevant United Nations General Assembly resolutions, UNCOPUOS guidelines, and principles of customary international law. Where existing law is silent or ambiguous, participants are encouraged to develop innovative yet practical legal solutions consistent with the principles of international cooperation, peaceful use of outer space, sustainability, technological neutrality, and equitable access to outer space.

Participants are expected to identify and address all legal issues arising from the factual scenario. These may include, but are not limited to, orbital traffic management, debris mitigation, active debris removal, allocation of responsibility, liability and compensation, regulation of commercial space operators, protection of terrestrial infrastructure, international cooperation, compliance mechanisms, dispute settlement, institutional governance, and any additional matters participants consider necessary to ensure the long-term sustainability of outer space.

GLOBAL CONTEXT OF WEAPONISED AND HOSTILE DRONE USE

The proliferation of Unmanned Aircraft Systems ("UAS") over the past decade has not been confined to civilian and commercial applications. Increasingly affordable and technologically capable drones, including modified commercial platforms, loitering munitions, and coordinated drone swarms, have been used by both State armed forces and non-State armed groups to conduct surveillance, smuggling, and, in a growing number of documented incidents, lethal or damaging attacks across international borders.

International bodies, including the United Nations Security Council and regional security organisations, have repeatedly expressed concern that the existing international legal architecture, comprising the Chicago Convention, international humanitarian law, the law on the use of force, and general principles of State responsibility, was not designed with such technologies in mind and leaves significant gaps regarding attribution, interception, retaliation, and civilian protection.

These gaps have become acute in regions where multiple States share dense, contested, or poorly monitored airspace, and where hostile or unauthorised drone incursions have led to escalating cycles of retaliatory action, including the shooting down of suspected hostile drones over neighbouring territory and cross-border strikes purportedly conducted in self-defence.

It is within this evolving and volatile context that the member States of the Kestral Union, a regional grouping comprising four neighbouring States, have convened treaty negotiations aimed at establishing a binding multilateral framework to govern the prevention, detection, interception, and accountability regime applicable to hostile and unauthorised unmanned aircraft operating within the Union's collective airspace.

THE ORIENTAL UNION AND ITS MEMBER STATES

The Republic of Arnania is the largest member State by population and possesses the most advanced air defence and counter-drone capabilities within the Union. Arnania has, on several occasions, intercepted and destroyed drones it identified as hostile after they crossed into its airspace from neighbouring territory, including one incident in which debris from a downed drone caused fatalities in a border town.

The Republic of Gortwaz shares its longest border with Arnania and has repeatedly denied responsibility for drones launched from or transiting through its territory, attributing several incidents to non-State armed groups operating from ungoverned areas near the border that Gortwaz claims it cannot fully control.

The Federal State of Vonagia has suffered the most severe humanitarian consequences to date. A drone strike of disputed origin destroyed a portion of a marketplace in a Vonagian border town eighteen months ago, killing thirty-one civilians. Responsibility for the strike remains contested, with Vonagia alleging that the drone was launched by a non-State armed group tolerated by Gortwaz, while Gortwaz alleges that the strike may have originated from a rival faction operating inside Vonagia's own territory.

The Principality of Ligead is the smallest member State and possesses minimal indigenous counter-drone capability. Ligead has expressed alarm that any collective interception regime could result in foreign military assets operating within its airspace or territory, raising sovereignty concerns, while also acknowledging its vulnerability to unilateral strikes by larger neighbours acting in purported self-defence.

THE ESCALATING CRISIS

Over the past three years, the Orientatal Union region has witnessed a marked escalation in incidents involving hostile, unidentified, or unauthorised drones, including the Vonagia marketplace strike described above, multiple instances of Arnania intercepting and destroying drones over its own airspace using surface-to-air systems, occasionally resulting in debris falling on civilian areas, at least two documented incidents of retaliatory cross-border strikes conducted by one member State against suspected drone-launch sites located within another member State's territory without prior authorisation, and growing evidence of coordinated drone swarm attacks attributed to non-State armed groups operating across the Gortwaz–Vonagia border region.

These incidents have exposed the absence of any agreed regional mechanism for the real-time identification and attribution of hostile drones, a shared understanding of when and how member States may lawfully intercept or destroy unauthorised drones, particularly where doing so may involve crossing into or affecting the airspace or territory of another member State, clear rules allocating responsibility and liability where non-State armed groups, rather than States themselves, are found to have launched an attack, and a framework for the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure from the effects of both hostile drone strikes and defensive interception measures.

Diplomatic relations between Arnania and Gortwaz have deteriorated significantly following the retaliatory strikes referenced above, with Gortwaz characterising Arnania's actions as a violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and Arnania maintaining that its actions were necessary and proportionate measures of self-defence against an ongoing and imminent threat. Vonagia has called for an independent international mechanism to establish attribution and accountability for the marketplace strike, a call that has so far not been accepted by either Arnania or Gortwaz. Ligead has urged all parties to prioritise a collective, rules-based framework over further unilateral action.

INTERNATIONAL LEGAL CONTEXT

All four member States are parties to the United Nations Charter and the Chicago Convention, and acknowledge the general applicability of international humanitarian law, the law on the use of force, including the principles of necessity and proportionality governing the exercise of self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter, and international human rights law to hostile drone incidents affecting civilians.

No existing multilateral treaty specifically addresses the interception, attribution, or collective regulation of hostile or unauthorised unmanned aircraft within shared regional airspace. Member States have, however, expressed openness to establishing a dedicated regional framework, including a joint early-warning and attribution mechanism, agreed protocols for interception and engagement, and a standing mechanism for investigation and accountability.

POSITIONS OF THE MEMBER STATES

Armania's Position

1. recognition of each member State's right to intercept and neutralise unauthorised hostile drones within its own airspace, using proportionate means
2. a regional early-warning and shared radar/detection network
3. limited recognition of cross-border pursuit or strike authority against confirmed drone-launch sites, subject to strict evidentiary thresholds
4. reluctance to submit its interception operations to prior approval by a joint body

Gortwaz's Position

5. an absolute prohibition on cross-border strikes by one member State against sites located within another member State's territory, absent explicit consent
6. recognition that responsibility for non-State armed group conduct should be assessed under an agreed, evidence-based attribution standard rather than unilateral determination
7. technical and financial assistance from wealthier member States to improve border monitoring and control of ungoverned areas

Vonagia's Position

8. establishment of an independent joint investigative and attribution mechanism for cross-border drone incidents
9. a binding compensation and victim-assistance framework for civilian casualties caused by hostile drone strikes or interception debris
10. mandatory, time-bound information-sharing obligations among member States regarding known or suspected non-State armed group activity

Ligead's Position

11. strict safeguards against the presence of foreign military assets within a member State's territory during any joint interception operation
12. a collective security guarantee or mutual-assistance clause to protect smaller member States from unilateral strikes by larger neighbours
13. a standing Kestral Union body, with equal representation for all member States, to oversee implementation and dispute resolution



NOTE TO PARTICIPANTS

1. Participating teams are required to prepare a comprehensive multilateral treaty draft on behalf of all four negotiating parties, namely the Republic of Arnania, the Republic of Gortwaz, the Federal State of Vonagia, and the Principality of Ligead, addressing the issues arising from this problem statement.
2. Teams are expected to identify relevant issues based on their understanding of the problem statement. The treaty draft should attempt to address these issues comprehensively through appropriate treaty provisions, institutional mechanisms, and implementation frameworks.
3. The treaty draft must be prepared in accordance with the official Rules of the Competition, which will be released separately on the official website of the organisers.
4. The draft must include all mandatory treaty provisions specified in the Rules of the Competition. Teams may also include additional provisions as they deem necessary to effectively address the legal, security, and humanitarian concerns arising from the problem statement.
5. The draft may not be limited only to the concerns explicitly mentioned in the problem statement. Teams may consider broader aspects of hostile UAS governance, including but not limited to detection and early warning, rules on interception and use of force, attribution and State responsibility for non-State armed group conduct, civilian protection and compensation, information-sharing, sovereignty safeguards, and dispute resolution.
6. Teams may draw upon relevant principles of international law, including the UN Charter, international humanitarian law, the law of State responsibility, ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices, and existing international instruments or treaty practices while formulating treaty provisions.
7. Teams may make reasonable assumptions where necessary for the purpose of drafting treaty provisions, provided such assumptions remain consistent with the facts and context presented in this problem statement.

CONTACT US

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