

## Introductory Note to the June 2020 Update of the COSPAR Policy on Planetary Protection

Responding to concerns raised in the scientific community that spaceflight missions to the Moon and other celestial bodies might compromise their future scientific exploration, in 1958 the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) established an ad-hoc Committee on Contamination by Extra-terrestrial Exploration (CETEX) to provide advice on these issues. In the next year, this mandate was transferred to the newly founded Committee on Space Research (COSPAR), which as an interdisciplinary scientific committee of the ICSU (now the International Science Council—ISC) was considered to be the appropriate place to continue the work of CETEX. Since that time, COSPAR has provided an international forum to discuss such matters under the terms “planetary quarantine” and later “planetary protection”, and has formulated a COSPAR planetary protection policy with associated implementation requirements as an international standard to protect against interplanetary biological and organic contamination, and after 1967 as a guide to compliance with Article IX of the UN Outer Space Treaty in that area (see for reference: UNOOSA 2017, Report of the Committee on the Peaceful Use of Outer Space, 60<sup>th</sup> Session, A/72/20, United Nations, New York).

Updating the COSPAR Planetary Protection Policy, either as a response to new discoveries or based on specific requests, is a process that involves appointed members of the COSPAR Panel on Planetary Protection who represent, on the one hand, their national or international authority responsible for compliance with the UN Outer Space Treaty of 1967, and, on the other hand, COSPAR Scientific Commissions B—Space Studies of the Earth-Moon System, Planets and Small Bodies of the Solar Systems, and F—Life Sciences as Related to Space. After reaching a consensus among the involved parties, the proposed recommendation for

updating the Policy is formulated by the COSPAR Panel on Planetary Protection (<https://cosparhq.cnes.fr/scientific-structure/ppp>) and submitted to the COSPAR Bureau for review and approval. The new structure of the Panel and its work were described in recent publications (Coustenis et al., 2019a, b).

The COSPAR Policy on Planetary Protection described in this editorial note and published in this issue of *Space Research Today* is the currently approved version (dated June 2020) which contains updates affecting requirements for the exploration of the Outer Solar System, based on recommendations formulated by the Panel at their January and December 2019 meetings and approved by the COSPAR Bureau. Any such modifications are with respect to the previously approved version (Kminek et al. 2017).

The authors wish to acknowledge the numerous scientists and members of the Panel who have helped over the previous decades to formulate, review and update the COSPAR planetary protection policy.

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### References

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3. Kminek, G., Conley, C., Hipkin, V., Yano, H., 2017. COSPAR’s Planetary Protection Policy. *Space Res. Today*, **200**, December 2017.