



Niklas Hedman Appointed as General Counsel to the Committee on Space Research (COSPAR)

Paris, 10 April 2024

The Committee on Space Research (COSPAR) is pleased to announce the appointment of Niklas Hedman as General Counsel.

Over the past few years, COSPAR activities have diversified significantly and grown in complexity.

Our portfolio, founded in space exploration, now encompasses such activities as coordinating international partners and entities, both public and private, wishing to develop and manage small satellites projects, or providing specialized advice to the United Nations or other international entities on matters going beyond the harmful effects of space experiments and planetary protection. These two topics were our initial contributions to the United Nations since COSPAR became the first observer to UNCOPUOS in 1962. However, an ever-expanding range of topics now includes:

- the long-term sustainability of outer space activities;
- environmental aspects of orbital and planetary activities;
- the exploration, exploitation and utilization of the Moon and other celestial bodies;
- space weather science and services;
- global navigation satellite systems;
- space mission planning;
- potentially detrimental space activities, such as space debris in LEO or cis-lunar orbits as well as impacts of orbital activities on terrestrial astronomy.

These activities span a range of “traditional” space science disciplines, but also include social sciences and legal aspects, areas that the new COSPAR Panel on Social Sciences and Humanities (PSSH) now covers.

COSPAR needs to continue safeguarding its leading role as a modern, worldwide platform at the forefront of diversified multi-disciplinary space research in the 21st century. Consequently, a General Counsel has now been appointed, to provide expert advice on matters such as:

- ethics
- space law and policy
- international relations and organizations
- protocols to improve matters of Inclusiveness, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA)

The position of COSPAR General Counsel, as a member of the COSPAR Bureau, requires a very solid background in some or all of these areas, and strong experience in managing international organizations dealing with space-related matters, as well as expertise in space law and policy. Mr Niklas Hedman was the logical choice for this appointment.

Mr. Hedman brings a wealth of experience and expertise to his new role, having served in various key positions within the space exploration and policy arena for over two decades. He is no stranger to COSPAR, having served as the Vice-Chair

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of the COSPAR Panel on Planetary Protection (PPP) since 2018, and as Vice-Chair of the Panel on Social Sciences and Humanities (PSSH) since 2022.

He also brings invaluable knowledge and experience from his extensive time at the United Nations, enriching his capacity to navigate complex international diplomatic landscapes for COSPAR. Notably, he retired from the United Nations in September 2023, where he held the position of Acting Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) since March 2022.

During his distinguished career at UNOOSA, Mr. Hedman served as the Chief of the Committee, Policy, and Legal Affairs Section of UNOOSA for 18 years. In this capacity, he played a pivotal role as Secretary of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses in Outer Space (COPUOS) and its subsidiary bodies, namely the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and Legal Subcommittee, overseeing critical negotiations and agreements on space governance.

Before joining the United Nations in 2006, Mr. Hedman served in the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. His impeccable track record includes representing Sweden at COPUOS for a decade, where he also held various elected roles, including Chair of the multi-year Working Group on the Review of the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III).

Professor Pascale Ehrenfreund, President of COSPAR, says, “We are delighted to have Niklas as General Counsel. His appointment underscores COSPAR's commitment to fostering a robust legal framework for space exploration and ensuring the peaceful and equitable use of outer space for the benefit of all humanity.”

In his new role as General Counsel to COSPAR, Mr. Hedman will continue to leverage his extensive experience and diplomatic acumen to advance the Committee's mission of promoting international cooperation in space research.

Niklas Hedman says “Space activities today are increasingly complex with growing cross-disciplinary diversity in space science and technology, social science, law and policy. COSPAR with its 65-year legacy in space research remains a unique platform for worldwide interaction among scientists in the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space. I am very excited to take on this important function and will work towards fostering the role of COSPAR in the new era of governance of space sustainability in Earth orbit and beyond.”

Mr. Hedman earned his Master of Laws (LL.M) degree from Uppsala University, Sweden, including specialization in petroleum law, maritime law and marine insurance law from Oslo University. He holds a Master of Laws (LL.M) degree from the National University of Singapore, including United Nations law, law of the sea, and Chinese business law. He received the International Institute of Space Law (IISL) Distinguished Service Award in 2017.

For media inquiries, please contact:
Leigh Fergus, leigh.fergus@cosparhq.cnes.fr

Note to Editors

COSPAR, the Committee on Space Research, was created in 1958, at the dawn of the space age, under the aegis of the International Council of Scientific Unions, now the [International Science Council \(ISC\)](https://www.isc.ac.uk/). COSPAR's objectives are to promote on an international level scientific research in space, with emphasis on the exchange of results, information and opinions, and to provide a forum, open to all



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scientists, for the discussion of problems affecting space research. In its first years of existence as an entity that ignores political considerations and views all questions solely from the scientific standpoint, COSPAR played an important role as an open bridge between East and West for cooperation in space. When this role became less prominent with the end of the Cold War, COSPAR focused its objectives on the progress of all kinds of research carried out with the use of space means.

COSPAR has played a central role in the development of new space disciplines such as life sciences and fundamental physics in space, by facilitating the interaction between scientists in emerging space fields and senior space researchers. Another recent inclusion in our portfolio concerns social sciences and humanities, which aims to provide opportunities for COSPAR to engage with SSH communities, including in the education area, and gives a role to our organization that is commensurate with today's interaction of space matters with the broader society.

A recent emphasis is the development of tighter bonds between science and industry, through the establishment of the Committee on Industry Relations, grouping 18 major aerospace companies worldwide, and advising COSPAR on how best to integrate the capabilities of industry into COSPAR's activities and by doing so, to best serve the interests of industry and science in a synergistic way.

COSPAR strives to promote the use of space science for the benefit of humanity and for its adoption by developing countries and new space-faring nations, in particular through a series of Capacity Building Workshops which teach very practical skills enabling researchers to participate in international space research programs.

COSPAR advises, as required, the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations on space research matters and on the assessment of scientific issues in which space can play a role, for example the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), in which COSPAR is a Participating Organization.

COSPAR fulfils its responsibilities to provide accepted guidelines on planetary protection to guide compliance with the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and other international agreements. This is managed through the work of the COSPAR Panel on Planetary Protection.

Lastly, COSPAR is the key entity worldwide in terms of developing, maintaining and promulgating clearly delineated policies and requirements as to the standards that must be achieved to protect against the harmful effects of biological interchange in the conduct of solar system exploration and use.

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