

Joint Statement on Global Orbital Debris Remediation Efforts

From 20 to 22 February 2024, LeoLabs and the Secure World Foundation are hosting an Orbital Debris Remediation Summit in Queenstown, New Zealand, to discuss and develop means to collectively address how to catalyze the operational deployment of remediation missions to include active debris removal (ADR).

Below is a joint statement signed in preparation for this Summit.

The accumulation of massive derelict objects in low Earth orbit (LEO) continues unabated; 28% of the current long-lived massive derelicts were left in orbit since the turn of the century. These clusters of uncontrollable mass pose the greatest debris-generating potential to the thousands of newly deployed satellites that are fueling the global space economy.

The long-term sustainability of space activities has become a critical issue for the nearly 100 spacefaring countries and the broader group of users of space-derived data and services. Achieving this goal requires focusing on three major areas:

- (1) Space traffic coordination and management whereby operational satellites operate and co-operate to reduce collision risk with minimal operational impacts;
- (2) Debris mitigation principles that encourage space operators to minimize the creation of new debris either from fragmentation events or abandonment after an object's useful mission; and
- (3) Debris remediation whereby the collision risk from existing debris is removed through a variety of technologies and processes.

We, the undersigned organizations, note that the debris-generating potential from the thousands of massive derelicts, primarily spent rocket stages and non-operational payloads, abandoned in LEO must be dealt with now, before a potentially major debris-producing incident occurs.

Recognizing that there are persistent economic, contracting, legal, and policy challenges that are still hindering the development of solutions focused on the removal of these massive objects, we have decided to convene the Orbital Debris Remediation Summit, to move from ADR discussions to ADR action.

The Summit presents an opportunity for organizations committed to pursuing substantive remediation efforts to cooperatively examine, characterize, and propose recommendations to the above challenges to enable development and deployment of ADR solutions of massive derelicts. Removal of massive derelicts is a global problem that will require international resolve, that is why this group believes it is important to accelerate activities in this domain.

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