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**UNILATERAL PLANETARY DEFENSE MISSION: AN INTERNATIONAL LAW
PERSPECTIVE**

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ABSTRACT

The paper seeks to analyse a unilateral planetary defense mission as an option to mitigate the impact hazard posed by a near-Earth object (NEO), and limits of state's responsibility to protect its territory and its population.

Responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity has been explicitly affirmed by the General Assembly of the United Nations (See 2005 World Summit Outcome Document). One may claim that since larger near-Earth objects can cause local damage or even global devastation, the concept of responsibility to protect should analogically apply to near-Earth object threat mitigation. In addition, the International Law Commission in its *Articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters* emphasized that the protection of the right to life "entails a positive obligation on States to take the necessary and appropriate measures to prevent harm from impending disasters".

However, potential failure of planetary defense mission is likely to affect multiple countries situated in the risk corridor. In addition, due to NEO's orbit uncertainties multiple countries are likely to be involved in the planning of the planetary defense mission. Given this 'trans-boundary' nature of the NEO impact hazard, international rather than unilateral response should be preferred. However, if international community (either represented by the UNSC or by the UNGA) fails to act a unilateral planetary mission may be state's only option to protect its citizens.

Thus, the paper seeks to analyse a unilateral planetary defense mission from international law perspective. In particular, the paper anticipates a situation when

there are several countries situated in the risk corridor, however, international community fails to act. The author provides an analysis of limits of a unilateral planetary defense mission arising out of international law, as well as an analysis of possible legal and political consequences of such a mission.
