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**Legality Of Planetary Defence Missions And Considerations For International
Decision Bodies**

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ABSTRACT

The Space Mission Planning Advisory Group (SMPAG) Ad-Hoc Working Group on Legal Issues was established in 2016 with the purpose of advising SMPAG with regard to legal aspects of planetary defence. The Working Group elaborated a report that presents a first analysis and assessment of the current legal context as well as of relevant legal questions and issues regarding the planning and conduct of a planetary defence mission. This presentation will cover some of the most important topics discussed by the Working Group. At the outset, it discusses whether, if a Near-Earth Object (NEO) impact threat is detected, there exists an obligation under

international law to inform states about this threat as well as an obligation to take action to mitigate the threat. In addition, the legality under international law of the existing variety of planetary defence methods will be addressed. The presentation will highlight that, amongst the various slow push/pull methods on the one hand and the impulsive methods on the other, the use of nuclear explosive devices (NEDs) represents unique challenges under international law. The presentation then discusses what kind of decision-making processes and fora could be envisaged in order to overcome these and other legal challenges, including the conditions of an authorization at the international level. The analysis will be based on general public international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, as well as on more specialized fields of international law, such as international space law and international conventions on nuclear weapons.