

Memorandum to Cabinet by the Minister of
Commonwealth and Foreign Affairs

Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts,
the Return of Astronauts and the Return
of Objects launched into Outer Space.

The Agreement provides that if, owing to accident, distress or emergency, the personnel of a spacecraft land in the territory, the personnel of jurisdiction of a Contracting Party, it should take all possible steps to rescue them and to return them to the launching authority.

2. It provides also that personnel of a spacecraft found on the high seas or in any other place not under the jurisdiction of any State, should be safely and promptly returned to representatives of the launching authority.

3. Contracting Parties, discovering that a space object or its component parts has returned to earth in the territory under their jurisdiction, also undertake to notify the launching authority if requested, to take such steps as they find practicable to recover the object of its component parts.

4. The text of this Agreement was unanimously endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 19th December, 1967.

5. The relevant General Assembly Resolution calls upon the three depository Governments, namely the United States of America, the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, to open the Agreement for signature and ratification at the earliest possible date.

6. The Agreement does not provide for the damage that may be caused by the launching of objects in outer space. However, the same General Assembly Resolution requesting the three depository Governments to open the Agreement under reference for signature, calls also upon the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to complete as soon as possible and in any event not later than the beginning of the twenty-third session (September, 1968), the preparation of a draft agreement on liability for damage caused by the launching of such objects.

7. It is expected that the Agreement will be opened for signature in the near future at Washington, London and Moscow and invitations to sign it in Washington and London have already been received from the United States Secretary of State and from the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

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8. The Crown Advocate-General finds no objections from the legal point of view to Malta signing and subsequently ratifying this Agreement.
9. Honourable Ministers are requested to agree that Malta should become a party to this Agreement.
10. A copy of the relevant General Assembly Resolution and of the draft Agreement is with the Secretary to Cabinet.

21st February, 1968.

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L-Arkivj Nazzjonali ta' Malta