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A PATHWAY TO THE SPACE SECTOR - A COUNTRY BLUEPRINT.

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ABSTRACT

In the past decade, humanity has witnessed the rapid growth and popularisation of space technology, activities, and applications, as well as subsequent changes in global dynamics and a shift in the sector's status quo.

With outer space belonging to the global commons regime, the space sector became multidisciplinary and demanded multistakeholder coordination early on. At the global level, the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs and its Committee for Peaceful Uses of Outer Space have served humanity as international governing bodies and decision-making fora since the beginning. On the other hand, the International Telecommunications Union ensured rational, equitable, efficient, and economical radio-frequency spectrum use. In Europe, the European Space Agency manages and coordinates the regional space programme with 23 member states. However, none of these entities would fulfil their purpose without contributions from states with their own space programmes, which are further dependent on indigenous capabilities, mirrored in national actors and technologies.

The needs of today's society, along with the increasing demand for novel technological and scientific solutions, have created fertile ground for the diversification of space actors, applications and activities, as well as the commercialisation of the global space sector. The sector that was once controlled by the governments and ruled by the first space-faring nations, as an oligopoly of developed countries, has become more open, inclusive and accessible to underdeveloped and developing countries. The governmental sector, with its slow-paced administrative and bureaucratic procedures, as well as the international and regional bodies with unanimous decision-making

procedures and diverging member-states' interests and policies, now increasingly rely on the agile, adaptable, and flexible private space companies for technological and scientific solutions. This multistakeholder space ecosystem is only sustainable if the interdependent actors cooperate and seek each other's input.

Therefore, for a particular state to enter this domain, it is necessary to contribute by offering its unique capabilities. However, in order to cooperate at the international level and utilise available resources effectively, an emerging spacefaring nation should also seek engagement and membership within relevant international governing bodies.

In practice, states often enter the sector by leveraging their unique talent, resources, and know-how. Many emerging space nations begin this journey through their first satellite programmes, frequently starting with student-led or small-scale CubeSat missions. This highlights that capacity building begins with education and awareness.

In the Balkans, recent pioneering examples include Montenegro's first satellite, Luča and Croatia's CroCube. These initiatives demonstrate that smaller nations can access space by adopting a strategic, step-by-step approach that encompasses the development of regulatory frameworks and space programmes, as well as capacity building through international engagement, partnership forging, exchange of know-how, raising awareness, and educating talent. Such examples show that entering the global space economy is not solely dependent on scale, but on vision, coordination, and the ability to harmoniously integrate into the global ecosystem.