



ITALY AS THE LAUNCHING STATE OF THE SAN MARCO I

To mark the 60th anniversary of Italy's first artificial satellite, San Marco I, launched on December 15, 1964, this article examines the legal aspects of its historical and geopolitical significance. It offers a critical assessment of Italy's role in the early space race, highlighting its position as the third nation to successfully place a satellite into orbit. A central focus is the legal classification of Italy as the "launching State" under Principle 8 of the Declaration of Legal Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, adopted in UN General Assembly Resolution 1962 (XVIII) in 1963. The article also analyzes Italy's decision to register San Marco I with the UN Secretary-General — an act that set it apart from other space-faring nations of the time, such as the UK and Canada. The registration was carried out in accordance with Part B, paragraphs 1 and 2, of UNGA Resolution 1721 (XVI). The article further challenges the statement found in the UNOOSA-maintained online index of space objects — under the section "Notifications from States & Organizations" for Italy — which states that San Marco I was "Registered also by the USA." It clarifies the legal and procedural implications of this assertion. The broader discussion covers subsequent satellites in the San Marco programme and underscores Italy's continuing contributions to space exploration from its Malindi base in Kenya. This enduring involvement highlights Italy's early and sustained role in global space activities.