

Date of most recent action: November 23, 2021

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

Done: Washington, London and Moscow April 22, 1968

Opened for signature: In accordance with Article 7, paragraph 1, the Agreement was open to all States for signature and any State which did not sign the Agreement before its entry into force may accede to it at any time.

Entry into force: December 3, 1968
In accordance with Article 7, paragraph 2, the Agreement shall be subject to ratification by signatory States and instruments of ratification and instruments of accession shall be deposited with the designated Depositary Governments [Russian Federation, United Kingdom, United States]. In accordance with Article 7, paragraph 3, the Agreement entered into force upon the deposit of instruments of ratification by 5 Governments, including the Governments designated as Depositary Governments under the Agreement. In accordance with Article 7, paragraph 4, for States whose instruments of ratification or accession are deposited subsequent to the entry into force of the Agreement, it shall enter into force on the date of deposit of their instruments of ratification or accession.

Note: This status list reflects actions at Washington only.

Legend: (no mark) = ratification; **A** = acceptance; **AA** = approval; **a** = accession; **d** = succession; **w** = withdrawal or equivalent action

Participant	Signature	Consent to be bound		Other Action	Notes
Antigua and Barbuda		November 16, 1988	d		1
Argentina	April 22, 1968	March 26, 1969			
Australia	April 22, 1968	March 18, 1986			
Austria	April 22, 1968	February 19, 1970			
The Bahamas		August 13, 1976	d		2
Belgium	August 14, 1968	April 15, 1977			
Bolivia	April 22, 1968				
Bosnia and Herzegovina		August 15, 1994	d		3
Botswana		April 18, 1969	a		
Brazil		February 27, 1973	a		

Participant	Signature	Consent to be bound		Other Action	Notes
Bulgaria	April 22, 1968	April 16, 1969			
Burma	August 21, 1968				
Canada	April 25, 1968	February 20, 1975			
Chile	April 22, 1968	October 8, 1981			
China		December 19, 1988	a		4
Colombia	April 23, 1968				
Congo (DROC)	April 22, 1968				
Costa Rica	April 24, 1968				
Croatia		May 18, 1994	d		5
Cyprus	May 9, 1968	January 20, 1971			
Czech Republic		January 1, 1993	d		6
Denmark	April 22, 1968	May 6, 1969			
Dominican Republic	April 22, 1968				
Ecuador	April 22, 1968	March 7, 1969			
El Salvador	April 22, 1968	February 19, 1970			
Eswatini		June 9, 1969	a		
European Space Agency		December 31, 1975	A		7
Fiji		July 18, 1972	d		8
Finland	April 22, 1968	September 10, 1970			
France		December 31, 1975	a		
Gabon		April 2, 1969	a		
The Gambia	September 20, 1968				
Germany	August 20, 1968	February 17, 1972			9
Ghana	April 22, 1968				
Greece	June 11, 1968				
Haiti	April 22, 1968				
Hungary	April 22, 1968	June 4, 1969			
Iceland	April 22, 1968	December 4, 1969			
India		July 9, 1979	a		
Indonesia		September 18, 2000			10
Iran	April 22, 1968	December 21, 1970			
Ireland	April 22, 1968	September 6, 1968			
Israel	April 22, 1968	December 19, 1969			
Italy	April 22, 1968	March 31, 1978			
Jamaica	July 23, 1968				
Japan		June 20, 1983	a		
Korea (ROK)	May 9, 1968	April 4, 1969			11
Kuwait		June 7, 1972	a		12
Laos	April 22, 1968	November 29, 1972			
Lebanon	April 22, 1968	June 30, 1969			

Participant	Signature	Consent to be bound		Other Action	Notes
Lesotho	July 18, 1968				
Libya		November 3, 2009	a		
Lithuania		March 25, 2013	a		
Luxembourg	August 14, 1968				
Madagascar	June 25, 1968	February 11, 1969			
Malaysia	June 18, 1968				
Maldives	April 22, 1968	April 3, 1970			
Mauritius		April 16, 1969	a		
Mexico	July 15, 1968	March 11, 1969			
Morocco	April 22, 1968	December 21, 1970			
Nepal	April 22, 1968	July 11, 1968			
Netherlands	August 14, 1968	February 17, 1981			13
New Zealand	April 24, 1968	July 8, 1969			
Nicaragua	April 22, 1968	June 30, 2017			
Niger	April 22, 1968	January 15, 1969			
Nigeria	May 3, 1968				
Norway	April 22, 1968	April 20, 1970			
Pakistan		October 18, 1973	a		
Papua New Guinea		March 16, 1981	a		
Peru		March 21, 1979	a		
Philippines	April 24, 1968				
Poland	April 22, 1968	February 14, 1969			
Portugal	April 22, 1968	March 25, 1970			
Qatar		March 13, 2012	a		
Romania	April 22, 1968	June 28, 1971			
Russian Federation	April 22, 1968	December 3, 1968			14
Rwanda	April 22, 1968				
San Marino	November 7, 1968	August 31, 1970			
Saudi Arabia		November 23, 2021	a		
Singapore		September 10, 1976	a		
Slovenia		August 20, 1992	d		15
Somalia	April 22, 1968				
South Africa	August 6, 1968	October 6, 1969			
Spain		February 26, 2001	a		
Sweden		July 21, 1969	a		
Switzerland	April 22, 1968	December 18, 1969			
Thailand		May 30, 1969	a		
Tonga		July 7, 1971	d		16
Tunisia	April 22, 1968	February 10, 1971			
Turkey	November 29, 1968	April 26, 2007			17
United Arab Emirates		June 29, 2018	a		

Participant	Signature	Consent to be bound		Other Action	Notes
United Kingdom	April 22, 1968	December 3, 1968			18
United States	April 22, 1968	December 3, 1968			
Uruguay	April 22, 1968				
Venezuela	April 22, 1968				
Zambia		August 20, 1973	a		

¹ Date of deposit of notification of succession to the Agreement by Antigua and Barbuda.

² The Embassy of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas transmitted to the Department of State, by note dated August 13, 1976, a note of the Minister of External Affairs of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas, dated July 16, 1976, stating that the Government of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas has examined the Agreement and “declares that it considers itself bound thereby by virtue of the signature of the United Kingdom and pursuant to customary international law. I would therefore request you to consider listing The Commonwealth of The Bahamas as a party to [the Agreement].”

³ Date of receipt of notification of succession to the Agreement by Bosnia and Herzegovina. The former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia signed the Agreement on April 22, 1968 and deposited an instrument of ratification on March 1, 1971.

⁴ The Republic of China signed the Agreement on April 22, 1968 and deposited an instrument of ratification of the Agreement on June 15, 1973. Effective January 1, 1979, the United States recognized the People’s Republic of China as the sole legal government of China. The authorities on Taiwan state that they will continue to abide by the provisions of the Agreement and the United States regards them as bound by its obligations.

On December 19, 1988, the People’s Republic of China deposited an instrument of accession to the Agreement which included a statement that the signature and ratification of the Agreement by the Taiwan authorities are “illegal, and null and void.”

The Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China to Washington addressed a note, dated June 3, 1997, to the Secretary of State, an English translation of which reads as follows:

“Your Excellency,

“In accordance with the Joint Declaration of the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on the Question of Hong Kong signed on 19 December 1984, the People’s Republic of China will resume the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong with effect from 1 July 1997. Hong Kong will, with effect from that date, become a Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China and will enjoy a high degree of autonomy, except in foreign and defense affairs which are the responsibilities of the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China.

“In this connection, I am instructed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China to make the following notification:

“The Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space done on 22 April 1968 (hereinafter referred to as the ‘Agreement’) to which the Government of the People’s Republic of China deposited its instrument of accession on [19] December 1988, will apply to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region with effect from 1 July 1997.

“The Government of the People’s Republic of China will assume responsibility for the international rights and obligations arising from the application of the Agreement to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

“It would be appreciated if the contents of this Note could be placed formally on record and brought to the attention of the other Parties to the Agreement.

“Please accept, Your excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.”

The Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Washington addressed a note, dated October 15, 1999, to the Secretary of State, which reads as follows:

"Dear Madam Secretary,

"In accordance with the Joint Declaration of the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of Portugal on the Question of Macao signed on 13 April 1987, the Government of the People's Republic of China will resume the exercise of sovereignty over Macao with effect from 20 December 1999. Macao will, as of that date, become a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China and will enjoy a high degree of autonomy, except in foreign and defense affairs which are the responsibilities of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China.

"In this connection, I am instructed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China to inform you of the following:

"The Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space done on 22 April 1968 (hereinafter referred to as the "Agreement"), to which the Government of the People's Republic of China deposited its instrument of accession on [19 December 1988], will apply to the Macao Special Administrative Region with effect from 20 December 1999.

"The Government of the People's Republic of China will assume responsibility for the international rights and obligations arising from the application of the Agreement to the Macao Special Administrative Region.

"It would be appreciated if the contents of this Note could be placed formally on record and brought to the attention of the other Parties to the Agreement.

"Please accept, dear Madam Secretary, the assurances of my highest consideration."

⁵ Date of notification of succession to the Agreement by Croatia. The former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia signed the Agreement on April 22, 1968 and deposited an instrument of ratification on March 1, 1971.

⁶ Effective date of succession to the Agreement by the Czech Republic is January 1, 1993; the former Czechoslovakia signed and ratified the Agreement on April 22, 1968 and February 18, 1969, respectively. On December 31, 1992, at midnight, Czechoslovakia ceased to exist and was succeeded by two separate and independent states, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic.

⁷ The European Space Agency declared its acceptance of the rights and obligations provided for in the Agreement in accordance with Article 6 thereof.

⁸ The Chargé d'Affaires ad interim of Fiji transmitted to the Secretary of State, by note dated July 18, 1972, a note of the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Fiji, dated July 14, 1972, stating that the Government of Fiji has examined the Agreement "and declares that it considers itself to be bound thereby by virtue of the signature of the United Kingdom and pursuant to customary international law." The Prime Minister's note further states "I would therefore request you to consider listing Fiji as a party" to the Agreement.

⁹ The instrument of ratification of the Agreement by Germany includes a statement that the Agreement will enter into force also for Land Berlin on the day on which it enters into force for the Federal Republic of Germany.

¹⁰ There is no record of signature of the Agreement by Indonesia at Washington.

¹¹ The Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Washington informed the Secretary of State, in a note dated May 9, 1968, in connection with the signature of the Agreement, as follows: "The signing by the Government of the Republic of Korea of the present Agreement does not in any way mean or imply the recognition of any territory or regime which has not been recognized by the Government of the Republic of Korea as a State or Government."

The Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Washington informed the Secretary of State, in a note dated April 4, 1969, in connection with the deposit of an instrument of ratification of the Agreement, as follows: "The ratification by the Republic of Korea of the Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of

Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space which was opened for signature at Washington, London and Moscow on the twenty-second day of April, one thousand nine hundred and sixty-eight does not in any way mean or imply the recognition of any territory or regime which has not been recognized by the Government of the Republic of Korea as a State or Government.”

¹² The instrument of accession to the Agreement by Kuwait was accompanied by a declaration reading as follows:

“In acceding to the Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space, 1968, the Government of the State of Kuwait takes the view that its Accession to the said Agreement does not in any way imply its recognition of Israel nor does it oblige it to apply the provisions of the aforementioned Agreement in respect of the said country.”

¹³ Ratified for the Kingdom in Europe and the Netherlands Antilles.

The Royal Netherlands Embassy in Washington transmitted to the Department of State a diplomatic note, dated January 9, 1986, which reads as follows:

“The Royal Netherlands Embassy presents its compliments to the Department of State and has the honor to request the Department’s attention for the following with respect to the Department’s capacity of depositary of [the Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space].

“Effective January 1, 1986 the island of Aruba – formerly part of the Netherlands Antilles – obtained internal autonomy as a country within the Kingdom of The Netherlands. Consequently the Kingdom of The Netherlands as of January 1, 1986 consists of three countries, to wit: the Netherlands proper, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba.

“Since the abovementioned event concerns only a change in internal constitutional relations within the Kingdom of The Netherlands, and as the Kingdom as such, under international law, will remain the subject with which treaties are concluded, the aforementioned change will have no consequences in international law with regard to treaties concluded by the Kingdom, the application of which (treaties) were extended to the Netherlands Antilles, including Aruba.

“These treaties, thus, will remain applicable for Aruba in its new status as autonomous country within the Kingdom of The Netherlands effective January 1, 1986.

“Consequently the [Agreement] to which the Kingdom of the Netherlands is a Party, and which [has] been extended to the Netherlands Antilles will as of January 1, 1986 apply to all three countries of the Kingdom of The Netherlands.

“The Embassy would appreciate if the other Parties concerned would be notified of the above.

“The Royal Netherlands Embassy avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Department of State the assurance of its highest consideration.”

The Royal Netherlands Embassy in Washington transmitted to the Department of State a diplomatic note, dated October 6, 2010, which reads in pertinent part as follows:

“The Kingdom of the Netherlands currently consists of three parts: the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. The Netherlands Antilles consists of the islands of Curaçao, Sint Maarten, Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba.

“With effect from 10 October 2010, the Netherlands Antilles will cease to exist as a part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. From that date onwards, the Kingdom will consist of four parts: the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten. Curaçao and Sint Maarten will enjoy internal self-government within the Kingdom, as Aruba and, up to 10 October 2010, the Netherlands Antilles do.

“These changes constitute a modification of the internal constitutional relations within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Kingdom of the Netherlands will accordingly remain the subject of international law with which agreements are concluded. The modification of the structure of the Kingdom will therefore not affect the validity of the international agreements ratified by the Kingdom for the Netherlands Antilles; these agreements will continue to apply to Curaçao and Sint Maarten.

“The other islands that have until now formed part of the Netherlands Antilles – Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba – will become part of the Netherlands, thus constituting ‘the Caribbean part of the Netherlands’. The

agreements that now apply to the Netherlands Antilles will also continue to apply to these islands; however, the Government of the Netherlands will now be responsible for implementing these agreements.”

¹⁴ The Agreement was signed and ratified by the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. By a note dated January 13, 1992, the Russian Federation informed the United States Government that it “continues to perform the rights and fulfil the obligations following from the international agreements signed by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.”

¹⁵ Date of receipt of notification of succession to the Agreement by Slovenia. The former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia signed the Agreement on April 22, 1968 and deposited an instrument of ratification on March 1, 1971.

¹⁶ The Tonga High Commission in London transmitted to the American Ambassador, by note dated July 7, 1971, a note dated June 22, 1971 from the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tonga stating as follows:

“The Government of Tonga has examined the Agreement . . . and declares that it considers itself to be bound thereby by virtue of the signature of the United Kingdom and pursuant to customary international law. I would therefore request you to consider listing Tonga as a party to this instrument.”

¹⁷ Included with the instrument of ratification of the Agreement by Turkey was the following declaration: “The Republic of Turkey declares that it will implement the provisions of this Agreement only to the State Parties with which it has diplomatic relations.”

¹⁸ The instrument of ratification of the Agreement by the United Kingdom states that the Agreement is ratified “in respect of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Associated States (Antigua, Dominica, Grenada, St. Christopher-Nevis-Anguilla and St. Lucia) and Territories under the territorial sovereignty of the United Kingdom, as well as the State of Brunei, the Kingdom of Tonga and the British Solomon Islands Protectorate . . .”

The British Ambassador to Washington made the following declaration in a note to the Secretary of State, dated December 3, 1968: “Acting on instructions from Her Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs I hereby declare that the provisions of the Agreement shall not apply in regard to Southern Rhodesia unless and until the Government of the United Kingdom informs the other depositary Governments that it is in a position to ensure that the obligations imposed by the Agreement in respect of that territory can be fully implemented.”

The British Ambassador to Washington addressed a note, dated June 11, 1997, to the Secretary of State which reads as follows:

“Secretary of State

“I am instructed by Her Britannic Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to refer to the Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space done at London, Moscow and Washington on 22 April 1968 (hereinafter referred to as the “Agreement”) which applies to Hong Kong at present.

“I am also instructed to state that, in accordance with the Joint Declaration of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the People’s Republic of China on the Question of Hong Kong signed on 19 December 1984, the Government of the United Kingdom will restore Hong Kong to the People’s Republic of China with effect from 1 July 1997. The Government of the United Kingdom will continue to have international responsibility for Hong Kong until that date. Therefore, from that date the Government of the United Kingdom will cease to be responsible for the international rights and obligations arising from the application of the Agreement to Hong Kong.

“I should be grateful if the contents of this Note could be placed formally on record and brought to the attention of the other Parties to the Agreement.

“I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.”