



The Hague Code of Conduct (HCOC)

The International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, commonly called The Hague Code of Conduct (HCOC) is an intergovernmental organization whose members implement transparency and confidence-building measures related to missiles capable of delivering nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, as well as related technology. As of February 2020, [144 nations](#) are members of the HCOC.

Objective

The HCOC [was founded](#) in 2002 as a practical step to control the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) capable missiles while strengthening and gaining wider adherence to multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms. The HCOC is intended to strengthen and augment the [Missile Technology Control Regime \(MTCR\)](#).

Subscribing states to the HCOC agree to ratification or accession to the “[Outer Space Treaty \(1967\)](#),” the “[Liability Convention \(1972\)](#),” and the “[Registration Convention \(1975\)](#).” They are also obligated to enact transparency measures, including annual declarations and pre-launch notifications.

Annual declarations provide an outline of a state’s ballistic missile policies. In their declarations, states resolve to include information relevant to transparency such as the number and generic class of ballistic missiles launched in the previous year that matches pre-launch notifications. Declarations regarding space launch vehicles should also include relevant transparency building information including policies, land (test) launch sites, as well as the number and general class of space launch vehicle missions conducted in the previous year consistent with pre-launch notifications. Member states are also asked to consider voluntarily inviting international observers to land launch sites.

Subscribing states agree to exchange pre-launch notifications for both ballistic missile and space launch vehicle launches and their test flights, including information on the planned launch notification window, the launch area, and planned direction of launch in addition to general class of missile or vehicle. Additionally, subscribing states can, as appropriate and voluntarily, develop additional regional transparency measures.

Finally, The HCOC agreement text takes a clear stance against utilization of membership to legitimize development or acquisition of ballistic missile programs and capabilities, stating: “implementation of the above Confidence Building Measures does not serve as justification for the programmes to which these Confidence Building Measures apply.”

Consequences for Violating HCOC Guidelines

HCOC guidelines are an informal set of general principles and commitments that can be adopted by any country and are not legally binding measures. There is also no regime-wide set of compliance procedures or dispute resolution mechanism. However, member states can consult bilaterally to clarify issues and discuss concerns at the HCOC’s annual policy-level regular meeting.

Why Join HCOC?

Membership in the HCOC demonstrates responsible stewardship of missile technology and opposition to WMD-capable missile proliferation, via transparency and confidence-building measures.

Sources: The Hague Code of Conduct, U.S. Department of State, Nuclear Threat Initiative, United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs