

Press Releases: International Space Exploration Forum Summary

Washington, D.C. (United States) January 10, 2014

Representatives of nations from around the globe met in Washington, DC, on January 9, 2014, at the International Space Exploration Forum (ISEF) to further advance the exploration and utilization of space and to highlight their direct benefit to humankind. This ISEF meeting continued the dialogue initiated by the European Commission and the European Space Agency, and most recently held in Italy in November 2011, which underscored the importance of space exploration, and its benefit to all citizens of the world. As host of the ISEF, the United States expressed its strong commitment to advance space exploration and urged all nations to join together to extend humanity's reach into the solar system.

ISEF participants noted that space exploration represents the ultimate challenge in our quest to explore new frontiers and expand our collective sense of humanity's place in the universe. All participants confirmed that innovation and knowledge derived from space exploration directly contribute to economic growth and societal well-being.

Discussions highlighted that many of the spaceflight achievements of the past half-century would not have been possible without international cooperation. Competition-driven innovation at the industrial and scientific levels is also an important element for the evolution of space exploration. Currently, working together, nations are successfully leveraging their strengths and executing multiple robotic and human space missions with broad societal benefits. Nations are coordinating efforts to better understand our planet and to expand our reach to a variety of solar system destinations, including asteroids, the Moon, and Mars. Nations participating in the ISEF recognized that human and robotic space exploration generates benefits for people on Earth and will be most successful by building on accomplishments and expanding partnerships with the long-term goal of human exploration of Mars. ISEF participants also noted the importance of policy-level commitment for realization and sustainable implementation of international endeavors in space exploration.

ISEF participants supported the work of space agencies participating in the International Space Exploration Coordination Group (ISECG) in developing a strategic roadmap for human space exploration documented in the 2013 Global Exploration Roadmap released in August. They welcomed an expansion of efforts to increase synergies between human and robotic missions to maximize the unique contribution made by each and their collective contribution to common goals. They recognized the value of the stepwise approach to exploration, enabling nations to demonstrate advanced space exploration capabilities through cooperative international missions which allow individual national priorities to be met while achieving shared long-term goals. They encouraged broadened participation in ISECG from additional space agencies.

As part of this common vision for space exploration, ISEF participants recognized the importance of the International Space Station (ISS) as the largest, most complex international scientific and engineering project in history. In addition to the benefits of continuing research, technology demonstrations, and experimentation, the ISS partnership illustrates that nations can collaboratively design, fund and complete an expansive and complex project. In light of the research that has been

conducted by more than 80 nations, the ISS partners encouraged expanded international access to this unprecedented facility, and noted its continuing value to future exploration endeavors. ISEF participants acknowledged the need to continue making concrete steps fostering international cooperation for additional space exploration projects, programs and activities.

ISEF participants recognized the growth in commercial spaceflight activities. Such private sector efforts expand economic growth, bring new vitality and ideas, and enhance space exploration. ISEF participants emphasized the importance of commercial spaceflight in exploration activities in accordance with existing national and international guidelines.

ISEF participants acknowledged that the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) is an important venue in which spacefaring and non-spacefaring nations alike can continue to discuss important issues regarding expanding humanity's horizons in space and furthering the objectives of the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space. These globally important issues include the long-term sustainability of the space environment for all users, and protecting Earth from potentially hazardous objects. With the participation for the first time by a number of developing countries in space exploration, ISEF also recognized the value of space activities in promoting sustainable development. ISEF participants noted the need for discussion of international frameworks and common principles for collaboration on future space exploration, drawing on the experience of projects such as the ISS.

The ISEF participants welcomed an offer from Japan to host the next space exploration dialogue in 2016 or 2017 and agreed that policy level consultations should continue in the interim until the next meeting. They committed to convey the results of the ISEF to various stakeholders within their respective governments.