

CONCLUSIONS OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SPACE EXPLORATION

by the Belgian Presidency of the EU, the European Commission, the Chair of the ESA Council at ministerial level and the European Space Agency on 21 October 2010

Space exploration satisfies the desire of humankind to discover new horizons. It is not only a scientific but also a political and global endeavour. Space exploration is a driver for innovation, technological development, and scientific knowledge which can bring about tangible benefits for citizens. It requires a long-term strategic vision for tomorrow's investments and embodies both cooperation and competition aspects.

The Conference concluded that concrete action must be taken in the following areas:

A. Technologies as an enabler for space exploration

Greater exchange of information and coordination is needed to develop space exploration technologies, enhancing in particular, breakthroughs for robotic missions and human exploration. Synergies with non-space sectors to provide increased societal benefits should be sought.

B. Space transportation for exploration

Secure and reliable access to space requires a degree of redundancy. International cooperation is a sound and cost effective way to ensure more resilient space transportation architecture to and beyond Low Earth Orbit. The possibilities to develop a common space transportation policy should be examined to sustain a robust exploration effort.

C. Exploitation of the International Space Station (ISS) as a platform for exploration

The ISS is a living model of international collaboration. It is a unique space research and technology platform that must be further used as a test bed for the next steps of exploration. ISS utilization should be opened, under appropriate terms and conditions, to all participants willing to cooperate in space exploration.

D. International high-level cooperation

A dedicated international high-level space exploration platform should be established. Complementing existing technical fora, it should promote coordinated strategic guidance and international cooperation.

E. Actions for Europe

Against this background, the EU, ESA and their Member States are invited to:

- Examine the feasibility of a European space exploration strategy building on existing competences, strengths and priorities;
- Support the extension of ISS at least until 2020 and strive for its exploitation. Seek that ISS utilisation is made accessible to all ESA and EU Member States to optimise and broaden European scientific, technological and operational returns. Study together with the ISS partners the potential opening up of ISS utilisation to additional non-European participants;
- Initiate further reflection on an international common space exploration transportation policy;
- Establish in 2011 long-term roadmaps and associated programmes for technology, in particular in critical areas such as life support, automation and robotics, novel energy sources and storage and advanced propulsion;
- On the basis of the proposed international high level space exploration platform, organise its first meeting by end 2011.