

Remarks As Delivered
By The Honorable Shana Dale
NASA Deputy Administrator
Administrator's Briefing
Launch of STS-123
March 11, 2008

Thank you for that introduction Tom (Pentrack, Deputy Director, International Space Station and Spacecraft Processing, KSC). It's tremendous to see so many bright-eyed people here tonight or shall I say this morning?!

I'd like to thank all of you, our special guests, for joining us at this launch of STS-123, the Space Shuttle Endeavour on this 25th assembly mission to the International Space Station.

Also I would like to recognize the following distinguished individuals:

Senator David Vitter, Congressman Bart Gordon, Congressman Brad Miller, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Congressman Patrick Kennedy, Congressman Nick Lampson, Congresswoman Kay Granger, Congressman Ron Kind, Congressman John Shimkus, Congressman Vic Snyder, Congresswoman Grace Napolitano, Congressman John Carter, Congressman Phil Gingrey, Congressman Russ Carnahan, Congressman Dave Reichert, Congresswoman Mazie Hirono, Congressman Ed Perlmutter, Congresswoman Laura Richardson and Congressman Adrian Smith.

From the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency:
The Honorable Yukihide Hayashi, Dr. Keiji Tachikawa, Mr. Tetsuhiko Ikegami, Dr. Masuo Aizawa, Dr. Kuniaki Shiraki and Mr. Yoshiyuki Hasegawa.

From the Canadian Space Agency:
The Honorable Jim Prentice; Mr. Guy Bujold, the Honorable Karen Casey, the Honorable Roger Valley and Ms. Susan Fennell.

This promises to be a pre-dawn spectacular. What a great night to be at the Kennedy Space Center – the place where America's space exploration dreams have taken flight for over 40 years. Nothing compares to a night launch. It will turn the night sky a brilliant orange and yellow hue as our

crew ascends into space. If you have yet to see a shuttle launch up close and personal, you are in for a truly remarkable and awe-inspiring experience.

This mission's first duty is construction. The flight will deliver to the International Space Station, the first component of the Japanese Experiment Module called Kibo, which means "Hope" in Japanese and the new Canadian Special Purpose Dexterous Manipulator, known as Dextre. Mission Specialist Julie Payette will explain the mission and the role of each astronaut in more detail.

However, I would like to take a moment to recognize Mr. Benoit Marcotte, the Acting Director General for Operations CSA, who is unable to be with us. I would ask that Mr. Bujold relay my appreciation and thanks to him for his significant contributions to Dextre.

The International Space Station, which undoubtedly the most complex engineering projects ever undertaken in space, is all the more impressive because it is a product of the contributions and teamwork of many nations from around the world. Last month, the European-provided Columbus Module launched aboard STS-122 and tonight the contributions of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, JAXA, and the Canadian Space Agency will further the completion of the International Space Station. When finished in 2010, the International Space Station will be more than an amazing laboratory; it will have added volumes to our collective experience in tackling large engineering challenges in microgravity, and it will stand as a monument to determination, perseverance, and achievement.

Now even tonight as we're counting down to the launch of Endeavour and to the completion of the International Space Station, we're also building up to the next steps, the next great era of space exploration.

As our Administrator Mike Griffin has stated, the International Space Station is a toehold in humanity's efforts to explore space. Our next step is an outpost on the moon. We seek to do this in close collaboration with our international partners.

Unlike an earlier era, we're going back to the Moon to establish a sustained human presence. This is no longer a vision; it is steadily becoming a reality. Work has begun on America's next spacecraft and

launch vehicle that will replace and go beyond the capabilities of the Space Shuttle.

Admittedly, years will pass – almost five years – between retirement of the Space Shuttle and the new capability coming on line. Like the construction of the International Space Station, this is another long-term project, being done in accordance with budget realities.

And speaking of those budget realities, NASA's budget is equal to 6/10ths of one percent of the federal budget. The return on investment is great given all the discoveries NASA has made and all of the technologies we've developed, discoveries range from detecting the smallest Arctic sea ice coverage ever recorded to finding vast stores of hydrocarbons on Titan, Saturn's largest moon, to figuring out how to use the available materials onboard the ISS to repair a torn solar array.

So, the exploration of space demands that we push the limits of knowledge, precision, and technology in ways that we could not have originally imagined and the benefits go far beyond our space exploration mission.

Our mission demands putting humans, robots and rovers into harsh, extreme, unforgiving environments. All must reach into the unknown to achieve our goals. This is where we are challenged to push the very limits of technology and where we realize the greatest innovations.

The technologies that NASA must develop to accomplish our missions are often refined, altered, or transformed by the private sector for commercial use. These 1,500 documented NASA-derived technologies are wide-ranging and include advanced breast cancer imaging, an advanced diagnostic tool to detect arterial blockage sooner, to a compact water filtration system used on the International Space Station which has been modified to help in poor, remote regions of the world where access to clean water can mean the difference between life and death.

At NASA we drive discovery, innovation, and inspiration. NASA funding – 6/10ths of 1 percent of the federal budget. I say that not to complain or ask for additional funding but to drive home the point that NASA produces an amazing return on investment.

And while we gather here in the wee morning hours to witness a phenomenal launch, every launch continues our quest to see what is beyond the horizon, to test ourselves against the unknown, and to accomplish the seemingly impossible. That's the spirit of exploration. That's why the space program shows us at our best: dreaming, daring and achieving.

Thank you again for coming here, and for showing your support for the space program.

Godspeed to the crew of STS-123 And Go Endeavour!