

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration
Office of the Administrator
Washington, DC 20546-0001



May 31, 2012

Dr. Steven W. Squyres
Chairman
NASA Advisory Council
Washington, DC 20546

STWS
Dear Dr. Squyres:

Enclosed is NASA's response to a recommendation from the NASA Advisory Council meeting held on March 8-9, 2012, at NASA Headquarters. Please do not hesitate to contact me if the Council would like further background on the response. I appreciate the Council's thoughtful consideration leading to the recommendations and welcome its continued findings, recommendations, and advice concerning the U.S. civil space program.

I look forward to working closely with you and members of the Council in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "C. Bolden, Jr.", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Charles F. Bolden, Jr.
Administrator

Enclosure:
2012-01-06 (SC-02) Enhanced Cooperation in Planetary Protection

NASA Advisory Council Recommendation

Enhanced Cooperation in Planetary Protection 2012-01-06 (SC-02)

Recommendation:

The Council recommends that NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA) renew the Letter of Agreement and further explore mechanisms for more closely coordinating their required planetary protection activities, including technology-development, with the goal of achieving high degrees of coordination and cooperative technology development for planetary protection to ensure most efficient use of available resources. Further, the Council recommends that the Planetary Protection Working Group (PPWG-ESA) and Planetary Protection Subcommittee (PPS-NASA) continue joint activities in planetary protection, including the regular exchange of meeting minutes and holding joint advisory meetings approximately every 2 years.

Major Reasons for the Recommendation:

The 2007 ESA-NASA Letter of Agreement provides for cooperation on planetary protection and is the basis for effectively coordinating joint development of planetary protection technologies. However, the current Letter of Agreement expires December 31, 2013. Close cooperation on planetary protection is important to the function of both NASA and ESA, particularly in the context of increasing participation in joint/international missions.

Consequences of No Action on the Recommendation:

The legal authority for cooperation in this important area will expire.

NASA Response:

NASA concurs. NASA will begin the process to renew the 2007 ESA-NASA Letter of Agreement at the appropriate time to provide a sufficient margin for extension prior to its scheduled expiration (December 31, 2013).