

International Academy of Astronautics: Heads of Space Agencies Summit

Representatives of 28 space agencies from around the world endorsed a [declaration](#) calling for increased international cooperation at a “summit” sponsored by the International Academy of Astronautics (IAA). The event took place on November 17, 2010 at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington, D.C.

The largely ceremonial gathering extolled the benefits of countries working together in pursuit of space activities grouped into four themes: human spaceflight, robotic planetary exploration, climate change, and disaster management. IAA studies on each of those themes were unveiled at the conference.

The declaration makes recommendations from IAA to the world’s space agencies in each of the four areas and concludes that a “consensus widely recognized is that many global challenges to come can better be solved by countries working together.” A larger circle of partners is needed, it says, but “confidence, trust, transparence [sic] and best practice sharing will have to be the key points for reducing impediments while promoting a safe and responsible use of space.”

After introductory remarks from IAA President G. Madhavan Nair, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg opened the conference by reviewing the important role the Obama Administration sees for international cooperation in space as set forth in the President’s new National Space Policy. Steinberg sees each of the four themes of the IAA summit as opportunities for international cooperation. He stressed that the United States is strongly committed to COPUOS and complimented its role in international discussions about space program issues. He also noted U.S. interest in working with Europe on its draft Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities and cited space debris as a particular issue that needs international attention.

Two rocket scientists who rose to the apex of their country’s political system then addressed the gathering: Abdul Kalam, President of India from 2002 to 2007, who sent a videotaped message; and Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine from 1994-2005, who appeared in person. Kalam’s rocketry career included serving as project director for India’s Space Launch Vehicle that launched India’s first indigenous satellite, Rohini, in 1980. At the IAA summit, he advocated creation of a World Space Council to decide upon and implement a global space program. Kuchma, who was Director of the Yuzhnoye Machine-Building Plant in Dnepropetrovsk during the latter part of the Soviet-era, used his time to advertise Ukraine’s space capabilities. He also credited Soviet rocket legend Mikhail Yangel, who founded the Yuzhnoye facility, for realizing in the 1960s that the U.S.-Soviet confrontation would eventually end and missiles could be converted into space launch vehicles ensuring high reliability, low cost access to space.

Following presentations about the four IAA studies and associated break-out groups to discuss them, the declaration was read by IAA Secretary General Jean-Michel Contant. A panel comprised of the 28 heads of agencies then spoke in support of it.

China was listed in the event's program as among the participants, but was notably absent from the panel. Several other countries sent substitutes or videotaped messages, but most of agencies were represented by their leaders. Included were Charles Bolden, Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); Anatoly Perminov, Director of the Russian space agency Roscosmos; Jean-Jacques Dordain, Director General of the European Space Agency (ESA); Yannick d'Escatha, President of the French space agency, CNES; and Johann-Dietrich Wörner, Chairman of the Executive Board of the German Aerospace Center (DLR).

Bolden is only one of several former astronauts who now lead their country's space agency or hold another significant leadership role in space programs and policy. Included in the IAA event were Canada's Steve MacLean, currently President of the Canadian Space Agency (CSA); Talgat Musabayev, now head of the Space Agency of Kazakhstan; and Romania's first cosmonaut, Dumitru-Dorin Prunariu, who is the Chairman of the U.N. Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOUS). Musabayev proudly spoke of being part of the International Space Station (ISS) crew that opened the new era of space tourism by welcoming Dennis Tito in 2001.

Each space agency head was given only three minutes to speak and, with one exception, they used their time primarily to laud the benefits of international cooperation and explain how their country's space program aligns with the declaration issued at the meeting. The exception was Dr. Conrado Varotto, President of the Space Agency of Argentina (CONAE), who spent most of his three minutes pleading for reform of the U.S. export control system. He said that without changes to the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) "it will be difficult to have real international cooperation."

Countries and organizations represented on the panel were the following (in order of appearance): Canada, the Czech Republic, European Space Agency, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, United States (NASA), Kazakhstan, South Korea, the Netherlands, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, India, Belarus, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, Thailand, United States (NOAA), and Vietnam.

IAA announced that it will host a second Heads of Space Agencies summit in November 2013 in Washington, D.C.