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HUMAN SPACE ENDEAVOURS SYMPOSIUM (B3)
Human Space Endeavour: Overview (1)

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A GLOBAL IMPERATIVE: WE MUST GO!

Abstract

In 2004, the U.S president presented a vision for a human return to the moon and Mars, in addition to an increase in development of spacecraft dedicated to exploring those worlds as precursors to human settlement. The arguments over why humanity should transition from a robotic to a human-based exploration strategy remain poorly justified to the general public. Although documents exploring the value of space exploration, and human-based space exploration specifically do exist, such studies are either not global in scope, or only address the philosophy behind humanity's innate desire to explore ("The mountains are calling and I must go" –John Muir). While certainly significant, these are insufficient to fundamentally justify to most people the investment in human-based space exploration.

To address this issue, a dedicated session on this topic has been held since 2006 at the annually held Space Generation Congress (SGC). SGC is an international youth space congress, officially held in conjunction with the International Astronautical Congress. It is endorsed by the United Nations Office of Outer Space Affairs, and is organized by the Space Generation Advisory Council, a non-profit organization supporting the United Nations Programme on Space Applications. The 2008 meeting will focus on delivering a media piece in support of the ideas developed here.

Consensus among participants supports the notion that a human presence in space is a natural continuation of mankind's exploration strategy, the cost of which is very reasonable compared to other social activities. Furthermore, human-based space exploration can drive short term economic benefits, and will have long-term inspirational benefits which cannot be obtained through a purely robotic exploration-based strategy. Such inspiration is critically needed to drive multiple sectors of our society, with the additional benefit of stronger international cooperation and understanding.