

42nd SYMPOSIUM ON THE SEARCH FOR EXTRATERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE (SETI) – The  
Next Steps (A4)  
SETI 2: SETI and Society (2)

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SETI : THE EARTH MUST NOT BECOME THE JAIL OF HUMANKIND

**Abstract**

1433: a key date in the history of humanity. The Emperor of China decided to suspend the expeditions of its fleet of exploration and conquest to the West; his vessels were approaching the southern end of the African continent. China closes on itself, falls asleep, and will only awake five centuries later. This page of history must not be forgotten. There are many reasons to suffer or to impose a planetary confinement. We, humans, have enough problems on our Earth to not worry about the other planets and their hypothetical inhabitants. Besides, if they exist, living forms and alien intelligences are probably too far away to be reasonably contacted and to establish real exchanges. Yet, the confinement is dangerous for our species which must therefore, with courage and obstinacy, promote an attitude of curiosity and develop a strategy of exploration. Its survival depends on it, as well as the maintenance of viable conditions on Earth. SETI is one way to assume this necessity, regardless of the risks involved: to be spotted by warlike aliens, to never be assured of the existence of ETI, and above all to shake the perception that we have of ourselves. But it is at this price that we can and must be human.