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International Cooperation - a cornerstone of 50 years UN Space Law and space diplomacy (1)

Author: Mr. Christopher Carberry
Explore Mars, Inc, United States, carberry@exploremars.org

Dr. Harley Thronson
National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Goddard Space Flight Center, United States,
harley.a.thronson@nasa.gov

Mr. Richard Zucker
Explore Mars, Inc, United States, Rick.Zucker@exploremars.org

BUILDING INTERNATIONAL CONSENSUS FOR HUMANS TO MARS

Abstract

The United States has talked about sending humans to Mars for over 50 years, but until recently, this talk did not gain much traction. Over the past few years, however, political and public support for human missions to Mars has swelled to unprecedented levels in the United States. Humans walking on the surface on Mars almost seems inevitable in the US. But is this optimism justified?

If the United States is to succeed in sending humans to Mars sometime in the next two decades, it will have to develop a convincing model of policy and programmatic sustainability. Successful and sustainable human exploration of the Martian surface will likely require a multi-national effort. While the United States will almost certainly be the driving force behind this mission, international partners, pooling their resources and expertise, will almost certainly be required.

This paper/presentation will highlight the many opportunities and challenges in building this partnership. Some of the specific topics include:

- International Space Station (ISS) partnership: ISS has become a model of a successful international partnership in space exploration – as well as a model of a sustainable program. Can this partnership expand and cooperatively move beyond Low Earth Orbit and on to Mars?

- United States Space Policy: Will US space policy remain focused on the goal of landing humans on the surface of Mars in the 2030s? If so, will this policy consistency provide new and sufficient incentive for international partners to commit to joining the United States to achieve the goal of landing humans on Mars?

- What role should the Moon play/what are the other intermediate destinations? The Moon has been a popular goal for various international space agencies and commercial entities. Is the Moon part of a critical path to build international support for Mars? Can lunar missions be accomplished affordably and not delay Mars missions in the 2030s?

- Industrial Partnerships: Are commercial partnerships critical to international Mars missions?