

53rd IAA SYMPOSIUM ON THE SEARCH FOR EXTRATERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE (SETI) –
The Next Steps (A4)
SETI 2: SETI and Society (2)

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THE FUTURE OF THE SETI POST-DETECTION PROTOCOLS: PROGRESS TOWARDS
REVISIONS

Abstract

The International Academy of Astronautics has been the leading source of guiding principles to be followed in the event of a putative SETI signal detection. In 1989, the IAA formulated a set of Protocols, the "Declaration of Principles Concerning Activities Following the Detection of Extraterrestrial Intelligence" which received widespread acceptance by the international scientific community. The IAA prepared a supplemental set of draft protocols in 1995 relating to the possible reply to a confirmed communication from an ETI, which was presented to the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

The Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence takes place in a dynamic context, and the Protocols are always a "work in progress" that must adapt to and reflect constantly changing scientific and social environments. Thus, the IAA SETI Protocols were streamlined and updated in 2010 after a multi-year process. Subsequently, the IAA SETI Committee has sought to review and revise the Protocols to keep pace with the expansion of methods of searches, the increased number of facilities and personnel conducting search activities worldwide, and the rapidly evolving information environment. In 2022, a Task Group was formed for this purpose, and a preliminary report was presented during the 74th International Astronautical Congress in Baku. The relevance of this endeavor has been underscored in the past year by the deepening interest in what happens after the discovery of life beyond Earth, as evidenced by the 2024 workshops and symposia sponsored by the NASA Astrobiology Program, and the IAU/Kavli Foundation, the work of the SETI Post-Detection Hub at St. Andrews, and the working group on "SETI and the Law" newly established by the International Institute of Space Law.

This report updates the activities of the Task Group following the Baku IAC, including further community consultations and proposed text, as we work towards a combination of timeless Principles reflecting the original intentions of the 1989 Protocols, and supplementary Codes of Conduct and Best Practices documents that can provide additional guidelines that can be updated regularly to respond to changing circumstances.