



PRESS RELEASE

3 September 2024, 09.00 CEST (UTC+2)

REPRESENTATIVES FROM NASA, ESA, JAXA, ASI, KASA MEET DURING COSPAR 2024 TO REINFORCE COOPERATION AND COORDINATION FOR FUTURE MISSIONS TO THE ASTEROID APOPHIS

At the initiative of the Committee on Space Research (COSPAR), representatives from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), European Space Agency (ESA), Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), Agenzia Spaziale Italiana (ASI) and the newly created Korea Aerospace Administration (KASA) met in Busan, South Korea, on 15 July 2024 to explore coordinating their planning and approach for missions to the asteroid (99942) Apophis.

Each agency representative presented the status of their current involvement in current and future planning for missions to Apophis (including extended mission for OSIRIS-REx, renamed OSIRIS-APEX, for NASA and the RAMSES mission for ESA) as well as the existing partnerships and mutual involvement in other agency's missions, e.g. the infrared camera provided by JAXA in ESA's mission Hera. Concepts to fly to Apophis, as well as reuse of existing payloads, spare parts and hardware, coordination of arrival time at Apophis of the different spacecraft, techniques to be demonstrated, science to be performed, and integration of scientific databases were also discussed during the meeting.

Although all risks of impacting the Earth have been ruled out for the April 2029 encounter, the asteroid Apophis will make its closest approach to Earth on Friday 13 April 2029, at an unprecedented distance. It will come closer to the Earth than the human-made geostationary satellites. It will even be visible to the naked eye speeding across the evening sky for an estimated 2 billion people spanning Western Europe and northern Africa. Apophis is one of the remnants of the bricks that formed planets and contain the record of the original composition of the solar nebula in which planets in our solar system formed. This once-per-7500-year opportunity to investigate the gravitational influence of the Earth on an asteroid should not be missed. Five years is short to develop and carry out the required investigations.

The agency representatives reaffirmed their strong desire to strengthen cooperation and coordination on such an important goal for humankind: both increasing our knowledge of the formation and history of the solar system and developing stronger capabilities in planetary defence.

The representatives stressed again the need for agencies to work jointly to prepare for this endeavour. This encounter offers a unique opportunity to inform the public at large about asteroids in particular and space research in general, and generate public outreach events and support material in the coming five years.

COSPAR is particularly proud to have been the initiator of this historic gathering, and stands ready to continue supporting this five-year effort as required.

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Note to Editors

COSPAR, the largest international scientific society dedicated to promoting global cooperation in space research, was established in 1958. It serves as a neutral platform for scientific dialogue among scientists from around the world. Today, COSPAR comprises 46 national scientific institutions and 13 international scientific unions, with 13,000 space scientists actively participating in its activities, including attending assemblies, contributing to panels and roadmaps, and publishing in its journals.

COSPAR's core mission is to facilitate dialogue and encourage international collaboration among space stakeholders across the globe. It operates through scientific commissions, panels and task groups that encompass all disciplines of space science, from Earth and atmospheric sciences to planetary science, astrophysics, solar and space plasma physics, and life and microgravity sciences.

A recent focus has been on strengthening ties between science and industry. This was achieved by forming the Committee on Industry Relations, which includes 18 leading aerospace companies worldwide. The Committee advises COSPAR on integrating industry capabilities into its activities, ensuring mutual benefits for both science and industry.



About NASA

NASA explores the unknown in air and space, innovates for the benefit of humanity, and inspires the world through discovery. For more than 65 years, NASA has made the seemingly impossible, possible. At its 20 centers and facilities across the country and with U.S. commercial companies and international partners, NASA leads studying Earth science, including climate, our Sun, solar system, and the larger universe. NASA conducts cutting-edge research to advance technology and aeronautics. NASA operates the world's leading space laboratory, the International Space Station, and plans to establish a sustainable and strong exploration presence on the Moon this decade through the Artemis campaign. In 2016, NASA established the Planetary Defense Coordination Office (PDCO) to manage the agency's ongoing mission of finding, tracking, and better understanding asteroids and comets that could pose an impact hazard to Earth. PDCO leads activities for protecting Earth from Near Earth Object impacts.

About ESA

The European Space Agency (ESA) provides Europe's gateway to space. ESA is an intergovernmental organisation, created in 1975, with the mission to shape the development of Europe's space capability and ensure that investment in space delivers benefits to the citizens of Europe and the world. ESA has 22 Member States: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia are Associate Members. ESA has established formal cooperation with four Member States of the EU. Canada takes part in some ESA programmes under a Cooperation Agreement. By coordinating the financial and intellectual resources of its members, ESA can undertake programmes and activities far beyond the scope of any single European country. It is working in particular with the EU on implementing the Galileo and Copernicus programmes as well as with Eumetsat for the development of meteorological missions.

About JAXA

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), was established as an Independent Administrative Agency in 2003, merging three aerospace organizations, the Institute of Space and Astronautical Science, the National Aerospace Laboratory, and the National Space Development Agency of Japan. JAXA is now positioned as a “National Research and Development Agency” as well as a “Core Implementing Agency” to support the Japanese Government in aerospace activities. JAXA has conducted asteroid explorations including Hayabusa and Hayabusa2 and provided the infrared camera in ESA’s mission Hera. The Agency executes ground observation including asteroids from Bisei Spaceguard Center.

About ASI

The Italian Space Agency (ASI) was established in 1988 with the task of preparing and implementing the Italian space policy in accordance with the Government guidelines. ASI is recognized as one of the most important global stakeholders in all space domains from human and robotic exploration to space science, propulsion, earth observation, navigation and telecommunications, thanks to and a continuous cooperation with the scientific community and Italian manufacturers and to fruitful international collaborations. The Agency coordinates the Italian participation in the European Space Agency (ESA), where Italy is the third largest contributor, and in the European Union programs and maintains international relations with numerous space partners and international organizations.

About KASA

The Korea AeroSpace Administration (KASA) was established on 27th May 2024, and announced its policy directions on 30th May, including asteroid exploration as one of the highest priorities. KASA is responsible for developing the national space strategy, implementing research and development projects, supporting the aerospace sector and promoting international cooperation.