

EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY

SOLAR SYSTEM WORKING GROUP

Resolution on Chandrayaan-1

The Solar System Working Group (SSWG), at its 117th meeting held on 20th January 2005 at ESA Headquarters, Paris, discussed ESA participation in the Indian Chandrayaan-1 mission to the moon. It is clear that the low altitude orbit and the expected enhanced solar X-ray flux will lead to a major advance in the scientific return of the D-CIXS2 instrument over that on SMART-1. It was also noted that the SARA and SIR-2 instrument would complement the proposed ISRO payload well. Overall, the mission is scientifically attractive. The SSWG also recognised that its involvement in SMART-1 put ESA in an excellent position to assist ISRO in operations, data handling etc.

However, the SSWG makes the following additional points: While they cautiously welcome new openings with the ISRO, they stress that such “political” missions should not be a financial drain on the science programme which has its own higher priorities developed over many years. The SSWG further notes that it is unable to assess the contribution to the Chandrayaan-1 mission in the context of other financial requests on the programme, and regrets that this contribution is not being tensioned against other such requests. In particular, the SSWG regards support for Chandrayaan-1 as being lower priority than either mission extensions for all presently operational ESA mission, or the development and implementation of the future ones.

The SSWG also notes that it is possible that ESA will have to pay for the payloads, and further notes that the selected instruments have not been subject to competitive peer review by the SSWG against other proposed contributions from member states to Chandrayaan-1, or indeed against any other small contributions to any science programme activity. Finally, should this collaboration go ahead, funding responsibilities for the post-launch operations and data analysis should be agreed in advance with the member states.