

**EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY**  
**SOLAR SYSTEM WORKING GROUP**

**Recommendation on the Mars Express extension**

At its 118<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2005 at the Austria Centre, Vienna, the Solar System Working Group (SSWG) heard the case for the one Martian year (23 months) extension of Mars Express (MEX).

Since beginning full scientific operations early in 2004, the results from Mars Express have captured the imagination of European scientists and the European public. MEX has shown that ESA can do ground-breaking science at a planet dominated by NASA in the past. The highlights as published in prestigious international journals include breakthroughs in most Mars science fields including geology, mineralogy and atmospheric science, and reveal an increasingly complex present-day climate system and a diverse and recently geologically active planet. The deployment of the highly important MARSIS radar next month is keenly awaited.

The 23-month extension will enable MEX scientists to perform a number of scientifically imperative tasks. These will include: a mapping of a large part of the surface by the Stereo camera to 20 m resolution that will provide a unique data set; the study of seasonal phenomena in the atmosphere, and its interaction with the solar wind; and follow-up observations to those made during the nominal mission. The extension will also enable the MARSIS penetrating radar to fulfil its original objectives.

***The SSWG finds the case for the extension to be absolutely compelling and unanimously endorses its proposed duration of one Martian year (23 months).***