

EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY

SOLAR SYSTEM WORKING GROUP

Recommendation on ESA's Ground Stations

At the 122nd meeting of the Solar System Working Group (SSWG) held on 5 October 2006 at ESA Headquarters, Paris, the SSWG was informed of the present status of satellites in orbit. Cooperation with NASA DSN continues at present in a mutually beneficial way. It is apparent that even under existing arrangements (including the New Norcia station) the scientific return of past, current, and future missions has been limited by ground station availability. Any deterioration in the existing excellent relationship with DSN and in its ageing equipment, would have an immediate impact on the existing and future science programme.

Noting that

- The cost of an additional ground station is small compared to total mission cost
- Ground station infrastructure constitutes a permanent improvement in ESA's facilities
- High resolution data of future missions will inevitably increase telemetry volumes
- Pressure on DSN will increase because of NASA's Exploration Programme

the SSWG unanimously recommends that investigations be initiated to establish a means by which an additional ground station can be procured to complete a global ESA network of 30m+ ground stations.