

EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY
SOLAR SYSTEM WORKING GROUP

Recommendation on ESA's Planetary Protection Policy

At the 122nd meeting of the Solar System Working Group (SSWG) held on 5 October 2006 at ESA Headquarters, Paris, the SSWG was invited to endorse a policy document (ESA/PB-HME/SBD(2006)10) on planetary protection. The SSWG welcomed the document and noted its compatibility with current COSPAR policy.

The following observations were made:

- At present, there appears to be no policy document covering protection of scientific targets from, for example, pollution and that this should be addressed in a future document.
- Present policies date from at least 20 years ago. In several cases, the SSWG was not able to judge the validity of quoted limits. It is therefore recommended that regular review, both at ESA and international level, should occur.
- The role of the Planetary Protection Officer is ill-defined, his/her location is not specified, and the person he/she reports to is not addressed. An informed debate on these issues should be initiated.

The SSWG unanimously endorsed the policy document under the condition that the above comments are addressed with respect to its implementation.