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Paris, 18 December 2008

To: SPC, SSAC, Working Groups and Scientific Community

European Membership in the JAXA Astro-H Mission Science Working Group

Dear Colleague,

The JAXA Astro-H mission is the sixth in a series of successful X-ray missions initiated by the Institute of Space and Astronautical Science (ISAS) in Japan, beginning with the launch of the Hakucho mission in 1979 through to the currently operating Suzaku mission. Astro-H will investigate the physics of the high-energy universe by performing high-resolution, high-throughput spectroscopy with moderate spatial resolution over the 0.3–600 keV energy range. The planned launch date is 2013. The payload will consist of:

1. Soft and Hard X-ray Imagers (SXI and HXI) to provide imaging spectroscopy in the 0.3-80 keV energy range with an angular resolution of <1.7 arcmin HPD.
2. A Soft Gamma-ray Detector (SGD) to provide high-sensitivity observations in the 10-600 keV energy range.
3. An X-ray micro-calorimeter spectrometer (XCS) which will provide imaging spectroscopy over an energy range of 0.3-10 keV with a spectral resolution of <7 eV FWHM at 7 keV.

A more detailed description of the mission and its science goals may be found at <http://astro-h.isas.jaxa.jp/>

JAXA has kindly invited ESA to appoint three European members to the Astro-H Mission Science Working Group (SWG). The SWG has the task to provide scientific guidance to the Astro-H project relative to the design/development and operations phases of the mission. It will include individuals from both the instrument teams and the broader astrophysics community.

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I would therefore like to invite individual scientists affiliated with institutions in ESA member states to apply for membership in the Astro-H SWG. Applications must be submitted by January 12, 2009, and must have a maximum length three pages. Applications will be jointly reviewed by ESA and JAXA.

The Astro-H SWG will be chaired by the Astro-H PI/Project Manager, Dr. Tadayuki Takahashi and will meet on a roughly semiannual basis, usually at ISAS. Meetings last (typically) two to three days. Travel expenses of the ESA selected members will be reimbursed by ESA. The Astro-H project tentatively plans to hold the initial SWG meeting some time in Spring 2009. Prospective applicants need to ensure that they will have the necessary time and commitment to support their participation in the SWG through the baseline science operations phase (early 2014).

Applications should be sent by email only, in pdf format, with a maximum file size of 3 Mb, to the ESA Astronomy Missions Coordinator at the following address:

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I thank you for your interest in participating in the Astro-H mission.

With my best regards,



Fabio Favata
Head of Science Planning and Community Coordination Office