

# 1<sup>st</sup> EU-ESA international conference on human space exploration Prague – 22/23 October 2009

---

## Closing statement by Minister LARUELLE

First of all, I wish to thank our host, Minister Miroslava Kopicova, for her remarkable hospitality and organisation of this conference. I also thank Messrs Pizza, Verheugen and Dordain.

As said several times today, space exploration can contribute to European identity as a highly visible expression of what can be achieved through political cooperation, pooling the technical and scientific capacity present in Europe.

An exploration strategy, backed by sufficient funds, could clearly be a boost to innovation and technological progress and have a positive impact on competitiveness.

Europe should focus on having all the essential building blocks that are indispensable to any exploration endeavour available.

Thus, Europe has the opportunity to become a crucial partner in the global exploration enterprise, based on its globally recognised expertise in cooperating across borders, as proven in the ISS programme. Europe should take up this opportunity.

More practically, Europe should concentrate on the development of key technologies which would make us a trustworthy partner in the framework of international cooperation. Europe could, in this way, aim at global interdependence between all the international players, instead of having a globe of independent actors.

As a priority, the EU, ESA and all their Member States must define a common position with regard to programmatic issues and financial implementation. No cooperation with international partners will be constructive without this internal asset.

In the short term, to prepare the conference on space exploration which will be organized in Brussels at the end of 2010, I propose that we establish:

- a roadmap of events between this conference and the next one, thus adequately preparing the background material for future debate at ministerial level;
- a Steering Group - uniting ESA and its presidency, the EU and the 'trio' of its presidencies (former, current and next) which has to be implicated in each step of the preparatory works, in particular in the elaboration of the roadmap. This Steering Group shall work - in close collaboration with the Member States – to organise some workshops at the beginning of 2010 to be integrated in the roadmap.

I already invite all of you to Brussels and I thank you for your attention.

\* \* \*