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From:	Commission
To:	Delegations
Subject:	International space exploration forum (Washington DC, 9-10 January 2014) - Information from the Commission

Delegations will find attached a note from the Commission on the above-mentioned topic with a view to AOB item 10 d) at the Competitiveness Council on 21 February 2014.

International space exploration forum**Information Note**

The process towards what has been called a “high-level platform” for space exploration was launched by Europe at the informal ministerial meeting held in Kourou in 2008. It has been followed by three dedicated international high level conferences at ministerial level. These conferences were organised by the European Commission, the European Space Agency (ESA) and Member States. The first two Conferences (the “Space Exploration Conference” held in Prague on 23 October 2009 and the “Second International Conference on Space Exploration” held in Brussels on 21 October 2010) laid the ground for the establishment of an enlarged, international mechanism of coordination and cooperation in space exploration matters. The participants of the Brussels conference identified in particular the need for policy discussions at international level and called for the organisation of a first meeting of an international, high level space exploration platform by the end of 2011, marking the evolution from the two conferences, prepared by Europe, to a truly global platform.

The Third International Space Exploration Conference which was considered at the same time as being the First High-Level International Exploration Platform took place in Lucca (Italy) on 10 November 2011. The major outcome of the conference was the adoption of the “Lucca Declaration” in which government representatives committed to begin an open, structured, high-level policy dialogue on space exploration, at governmental level, implying *de facto* that the European proposal of high-level policy dialogue on space exploration had been accepted by the international community. The United States offered to continue the process started in Lucca, by hosting the next meeting.

The International Space Exploration Forum (ISEF) took place in Washington, D.C. (USA) on 9 January 2014. This meeting was hosted by the U.S. Department of State. Government representatives from 34 countries attended the meeting, including 12 EU countries as well as the European Commission and ESA.

The objective of ISEF was to further advance the international dialogue on exploration and utilisation of space and to highlight the direct benefit of space exploration to humankind. Europe's presence at the Forum and in the debates was visible with functions in the programme and interventions in all three sessions.

- Session I: National Policies and Public Support for Space Exploration
- Session II: Space Exploration and Utilization: Strategies and Shared Goals
- Session III: International Cooperation in Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

ISEF participants noted that space exploration represents the ultimate challenge in the quest to explore new frontiers and expand the collective sense of humanity's place in the universe. All participants confirmed that innovation and knowledge derived from space exploration directly contribute to economic growth and societal well-being. The International Space Station (ISS) was recognised as providing a visible symbol of the value of international cooperation, as a stepping stone for broader future collaboration, as well as an enabler for the utilisation of space for global research and development. Delegations recognised that human and robotic space exploration is worth the investment of government resources, providing benefits, direct and indirect, foreseen and unimagined for the citizens on Earth. The importance of building public support for space exploration by demonstrating how investing in space benefits humankind, prepares our future in science and technology, and boosts innovation leading to growth was also stressed.

The results of the Forum are positive for Europe with the acknowledgement in the Forum Summary of the importance of the process initiated in Europe, the reference in the conclusions of the intent to make concrete steps around specific projects and the need for policy level consultation in the interim until the next Forum meeting. Japan announced also that it will host the next forum meeting (in 2016 or 2017) and has proposed to prepare it in collaboration with the USA and Europe (the Commission and ESA).