

# INTERNATIONAL SPACE EXPLORATION COORDINATION GROUP

## Terms of Reference

*Last Updated: Oct 2022*

In 2006, 14 space agencies<sup>1</sup> began a series of discussions on global interests in space exploration. Together they took the unprecedented step of elaborating a vision for peaceful robotic and human space exploration, focusing on destinations within the Solar System where humans may one day live and work, and developed a common set of key space exploration themes. This vision was articulated in ‘The Global Exploration Strategy: The Framework for Coordination,’ hereinafter referred to as the ‘Framework Document,’ which was released on May 31, 2007. A key finding of the Framework Document is the need to establish a voluntary, non-binding international coordination mechanism through which individual agencies may exchange information regarding interests, objectives, and plans in space exploration with the goal of strengthening both individual exploration programs as well as the collective effort.

These Terms of Reference establishing the International Space Exploration Coordination Group (ISECG) are intended to meet this need.

The ISECG may evolve incrementally, as required, to meet the changing needs of the Participating Agencies.<sup>2</sup>

## I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES OF THE ISECG

### I.1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the ISECG will be to work collectively towards the further development and implementation of the global exploration strategy set out in the Framework Document, in its entire scope, by:

- providing a forum for participants to discuss their interests, objectives and plans in space exploration; and
- promoting interest and engagement in space exploration activities throughout society worldwide.

The expected benefits of establishing the ISECG are to increase robustness, safety and cost effectiveness of individual and collective exploration goals, and to facilitate the ability of Participating Agencies to engage in productive bilateral or multilateral discussions, while preserving their autonomy. This will contribute to strengthening the sustainability of global space exploration.

### I.2. SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES

The scope of the ISECG activities will be broad and strategic. The ISECG will focus on developing non-binding findings, recommendations and other outputs as necessary for use by Participating Agencies.

Specific objectives and the scope of ISECG activities are defined in the most recent ISECG workplan.

The ISECG will also assist Participating Agencies by identifying (i) the need for and

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<sup>1</sup> Space agencies” refers to government organizations responsible for space activities.

<sup>2</sup> Participating Agencies are defined in paragraph III.1

41 benefits of establishing further elements of the international coordination mechanism,  
42 such as ad hoc working groups or workshops; or (ii) whether an issue should be referred  
43 to existing ‘expert’ groups outside of ISECG, for the purposes of providing analysis and  
44 advice to the ISECG.

## 45 **II. PRINCIPLES**

46 The following key principles for international coordination for sustainable space  
47 exploration, and examples of resulting requirements for each of the principles, were  
48 identified in the Framework Document as applicable to the ISECG:

### 49 • Open and Inclusive

50 – receives inputs from all interested agency participants that invest in and  
51 perform activities related to space exploration

52 – provides for consultations among all interested agencies with a vested  
53 interest in space exploration, and also space agencies or national government  
54 agencies without specific related capabilities

### 55 • Flexible and Evolutionary

56 – takes into account and may integrate existing consultation and coordination  
57 mechanisms

### 58 • Effective

59 – encourages participating agencies to accept the role of the coordination  
60 process and act upon the anticipated results of the coordination  
61 mechanism

### 62 • Mutual Interest

63 – contributes to common peaceful goals and benefits all participants

64 – respects the national prerogatives of participating agencies

65 – allows for optional participation based on the level of each agency’s  
66 interest

## 67 **III. MEMBERSHIP, COMPOSITION AND OPERATING PROCEDURES**

### 68 **III.1. MEMBERSHIP**

69 Membership of the ISECG is open to space agencies which have or are developing  
70 space exploration capabilities for peaceful purposes, and which have a vested interest to  
71 participate in the strategic coordination process for space exploration.

72 The space agencies that have contributed to the development of the Framework  
73 Document are automatically invited to be Participating Agencies to the ISECG and can  
74 join at any time through an official acceptance of these Terms of Reference. Other  
75 space agencies that wish to join the ISECG should submit an executive level written  
76 request to the ISECG Secretariat who will inform the ISECG Chair and Participating  
77 Agencies, stating their sharing of the principles and objectives contained in the  
78 Framework Document, their acceptance of these Terms of Reference and a brief

79 description of their stated objectives for becoming ISECG Participating Agencies. Such  
80 requests will be approved upon consensus of the Participating Agencies.

## 81 **III.2. ISECG COMPOSITION AND OPERATING PROCEDURES**

### 82 ***III.2.1. ISECG Composition***

83 Each Participating Agency will designate authorized representatives to the ISECG.  
84 These representatives are expected to be staff of the designating Participating Agency.  
85 In all cases, conflicts of interests will be avoided.

86 Any ISECG Participating Agency may request by invitation the presence at an ISECG  
87 meeting of appropriate experts to provide advice and guidance, or to help resolve a  
88 particular issue. In all cases such advisors will be considered part of the delegation that  
89 issued the invitation, for the duration of the meeting. Delegations intending to invite an  
90 advisor will notify the ISECG Secretariat in a timely fashion.

### 91 ***III.2.2. ISECG Operating Procedures***

92 • The ISECG meets on a regular basis at least once a year or more  
93 frequently as necessary.

94 • Meetings of the ISECG will be scheduled where possible in conjunction  
95 with exploration related events.

96 • The chairmanship of ISECG rotates on average about every 12-18  
97 months. The ISECG Chair, supported by the Secretariat is responsible  
98 for issuing the meeting minutes and for ensuring continuity with the next  
99 Chair.

100 • Meetings are hosted by the Participating Agencies on a voluntary basis.  
101 Meeting venues will be agreed by the ISECG by consensus, upon  
102 proposal by one or more of the Participating Agency(ies). The  
103 Participating Agency(ies) proposing to host a meeting will bear local  
104 administrative costs associated with holding the meeting.

105 • ISECG operates by consensus.

106 • ISECG will establish its annual workplan.

107 • ISECG products are reviewed and endorsed within Participating  
108 Agencies at the appropriate managerial level and then endorsed by  
109 consensus at ISECG.

## 110 **IV. SECRETARIAT**

111 The ISECG will be supported by a Secretariat, whose main tasks include administrative  
112 support to meetings and other work as decided by the ISECG.

113 The Secretariat will consist of staff proposed by ISECG Participating Agencies on a  
114 voluntary basis without exchange of funds.

115 Terms of Reference detailing functions, form and operating procedures for the  
116 Secretariat are defined and maintained by the ISECG.

**117 V. AMENDMENTS**

118 These Terms of Reference may be amended by the ISECG Participating Agencies by  
119 consensus.

**120 VI. WITHDRAWAL**

121 Any Participating Agency may withdraw at any time from the ISECG by providing  
122 written notification to the ISECG Secretariat.

**123 VII. ESTABLISHMENT AND ADOPTION**

124 These Terms of Reference became effective for those Participating Agencies who  
125 accepted them on 6 November 2007 at the time of the Berlin Space Exploration  
126 Conference.

127 The ISECG was initially established for a 5-year period. ISECG Participating Agencies  
128 agreed to extend ISECG for an additional 10 years, until 6 November 2022, and  
129 subsequently extended until 31 December 2030.

130 These Terms of Reference will become effective for other space agencies that elect to  
131 adopt the Terms of Reference in accordance with the procedures established herein.

132 The adoption of these Terms of Reference does not create any legal obligations on the  
133 part of the ISECG Participating Agencies.