



International Astronomical Union
Union Astronomique Internationale

Dr. Ian F Corbett, General Secretary

98bis bd Arago, FR - 75014 Paris, France

Phone: +33 (0)1 43 25 83 58 - Fax: +33 (0)1 43 25 26 16

Email: icorbett@eso.org - URL: <http://www.iau.org>

21 July 2011

Professor Debra M. Elmegreen
President
American Astronomical Society,
2000 Florida Ave. N.W., Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20009
USA

Dear Professor Elmegreen,

The International Astronomical Union (IAU) Executive Committee is concerned by recent developments possibly affecting the future of the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST). Whilst it is not for the IAU to comment on matters which are the prerogative of National Members, it wishes to associate itself with the American Astronomical Society, the Canadian Astronomical Society and the European Astronomical Society in strongly supporting the scientific case for the JWST.

It is widely accepted that the Hubble Space Telescope and its discoveries have transformed astronomy and had enormous worldwide impact on the public appreciation of science. The JWST, as the proposed successor to the Hubble, has capabilities surpassing those of the Hubble and will enable astronomers worldwide to address the most pressing questions in modern astrophysics. New technological advances by the JWST will enable fundamental discoveries of planets around other stars and the formation of the first structure in the early universe, topics of enormous public interest. It is seen by the astronomical community as a cornerstone of humanity's exploration of the cosmos for the coming decades, and its importance to science cannot be overstated.

The IAU fully appreciates the current difficult economic times that now confront the world. Nevertheless, the IAU strongly supports the completion of this vitally important international project.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'I. F. Corbett', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Executive Committee

Officers:

Prof. Robert Williams (USA), President
Dr. Norio Kaifu (Japan), President Elect
Dr. Ian F. Corbett (UK), General Secretary
Dr. Thierry Montmerle (France), Assistant General Secretary

Vice Presidents:

Prof. Matthew Colless (Australia)
Prof. Martha P. Haynes (USA)
Prof. George K. Miley (the Netherlands)
Prof. Jan Palouš (Czech Republic)
Dr. Marta G. Rovira (Argentina)
Prof. Giancarlo Setti (Italy)