



SOCIETÀ ASTRONOMICA ITALIANA

Largo E. Fermi 5, 50125 Firenze

PRESIDENZA: Dipartimento di Fisica, Via della Ricerca Scientifica 1, 00133 Roma

Il Presidente

Rome 8 August 2011

Prof. Debra Elmegreen
President AAS
Dept. of Physics & Astronomy
124 Raymond Avenue
VC Box 278
Poughkeepsie, NY 12604
United States

RE: James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) project

Dear President,

the Italian Astronomical Society follows with great concern the evolution of the situation of the JWST project, as it is convinced that its cancellation would cause severe damage to the advancement of astronomy worldwide.

JWST promises to be one of the world leading instruments for the coming decade in astronomy. Following on the achievements of the Hubble Space Telescope, it will focus on the many questions related to the origins of planets, stars and galaxies. It is expected to be unsurpassed in scope and capabilities. In addition, many major developments in world astronomy, like the ALMA array and the giant telescope E-ELT, are being designed and developed taking into account the expected capabilities of JWST. Together these instruments will bring mankind to the next step in the understanding of the Cosmos. JWST is an essential part of this development. The loss of JWST would therefore damage astronomy in a major way in the USA, in Europe and in the world.

Italian astronomers within the instrument teams, and also very many others with no project involvement, have planned research programs for the coming years building on JWST capabilities, trusting that it will be launched as planned.

The Italian Astronomical Society is celebrating this year 140 years of life. Thus I take the liberty to express to the sister society, the AAS, the concerns of its members about the current uncertainties affecting the development of the JWST mission. They also want to convey their hope that fruitful solutions will be found to complete and launch what promises to be a world leading astronomical observatory.

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Il Presidente

For the moment, I would like to inform you that, beginning-July 2012 we shall organize EWASS 2012 (European Week of Astronomy and Space Science) in Rome, and it would be wonderful if on that occasion you could come and assure us that JWST is funded and moving toward launch!

Best wishes

Prof. Roberto Buonanno, President

cc

The Honorable Charles Bolden
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20546-0001

cc

Dr. John P. Holdren
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