



Austrian Society for Astronomy and Astrophysics

President: Prof. Dr. Manuel Güdel
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Dr. John Holdren
Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy
Executive Office of the President
725 17th Street, Room 5228
Washington, DC 20502, USA

Vienna, 28 September 2011

Dear Dr. Holdren,

the Austrian Society for Astronomy and Astrophysics (OeGAA) is deeply concerned about the potential cancellation of the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) project. The OeGAA, a national society representing the interests of Austria's observational and theoretical astronomers, considers JWST to be the leading future astronomical observatory in space and a technological milestone in human exploration of the Universe. Its loss would be a tragedy for many fields of astronomical research.

JWST will revolutionize our understanding of the first assembly of galaxies, the formation of stars, and the birth and evolution of habitable planets. Its unprecedented capabilities will advance astrophysical science in a similar way as the Hubble Space Telescope (HST) did, and like HST, it will attract the attention of the public as well as of students anticipating a career in this fascinating science. Many ground-based facilities now under construction or in the planning (such as "Extremely Large Telescopes" or the "Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array" ALMA) will profit from the complementary and frontier capabilities provided by JWST.

Our Society applauds and supports the recent proposal by the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee to provide continued funding of JWST, and is pleased that NASA has declared JWST one of its top priorities. The society remains convinced that, once in orbit, JWST will be the key astronomical observatory for many years to come, and expresses its hope that the project can be successfully completed.

Yours sincerely,
for the Austrian Society for Astronomy and Astrophysics:

Prof. Dr. Gerhard Hensler
Vice President

CC: The Honorable Charles Bolden, Administrator, National Aeronautics and Space Administration