

To Dr John Holdren, Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy

Dear Dr Holdren

On July 6, 2011, the US House Appropriations Committee released the Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill for the fiscal year 2012. This bill suggests a reduction by \$1.6 billion below FY2011 in NASA funding. As part of this, the bill calls for a termination of all funding to the NASA-led James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) with significant contributions from the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Canadian Space Agency (CSA), from European and French astronomers, and from European space industry over more than 10 years.

The international astrophysical community was hoping that the JWST would extend the broad scientific successes of the aging Hubble Space Telescope (HST) after its well-deserved retirement. The JWST is not only a successor to HST: it will open up new and unique scientific avenues as it will explore a regime of the electromagnetic spectrum that perfectly matches the requirement to detect the first light in the Universe and study our origins.

But, perhaps, more than that, the JWST would play the same crucial educational role than HST in providing the people of the world (and not only the astrophysicists and the scientists) with breathtaking images and understanding of the remote universe. After HST, there are several generations of children and students that began to learn how the Universe, the stars, the planets, and the life, have evolved to reach what we see and what we are, today.

The Société Française d'Astronomie et d'Astrophysique (SF2A, French Astronomical and Astrophysical Society) is very concerned by the fact that end of the JWST programme would strongly affect the progress of our knowledge of the Universe and perhaps would suggest a turn-down of the awareness gained from the HST.

For the Council of the French Society of Astronomy and Astrophysics
Dr Corinne Charbonnel, President of the SF2A



cc. Richard Howard, Deputy Chief Technologist, JWST program manager at NASA Headquarters
Dr Alan P. Boss, Chair, NASA Advisory Council, Astrophysics subcommittee
Dr Debra M. Elmegreen, President American Astronomical Society
Dr. Dan Clemens, Chair, AURA