

## SETI Post-Detection Taskgroup

Minutes of the meeting held on September 28, 2010, at the Holiday Inn Hotel, Prague, in conjunction with the 2010 International Astronautical Congress

In attendance:

Paul Davies (Chair)  
Carol Oliver (Deputy Chair)  
Ivan Almar  
Kathryn Denning  
Claudio Maccone  
Stello Montebugnoli  
Paolo Musso  
Margaret Race  
Seth Shostak  
Paul Shuch  
Doug Vakoch  
Lori Walton

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Meeting was convened at 8:00 am.

1. The main points of the meeting held at Arizona State University in February 2008 were reviewed.
2. Membership criteria. Following discussion, no fixed policy for soliciting or accepting membership emerged. It was noted that the size of the Taskgroup does not appear to be fixed, so that some quality control needs to be exercised, in the first instance by the Chair, before admitting new members. In addition, inactive members should be rotated off. It was also noted that the lack of a budget would imply a strong selection effect on membership. Considerable discussion was devoted to fresh media reports that the United Nations had designated Dr Mazlan Othman, a Malaysian astrophysicist based in Vienna, as “ambassador to the aliens,” thus trespassing on the Taskgroup’s territory, but these reports had since been discovered as inaccurate. Nevertheless it was decided that UN interest in post-detection issues would be welcome, and that Dr. Othman should be approached by Kathryn Denning with the intention of possibly recruiting her to the Taskgroup. There was a general feeling that the membership is too narrow, and that there was good potential to recruit members from among the ranks of the once flourishing Russian, and emerging Chinese, SETI programs. The name of Dr. Ren-Dong Nam was mentioned in the latter category.
3. The SETI Permanent Study Group post-detection protocol statement, in its new, improved and abbreviated form, was discussed. This statement conforms to Taskgroup thinking, but as it is not yet officially adopted by the IAA, it was merely noted as both desirable and pertinent. Meanwhile, the Taskgroup continues to endorse the existing, more verbose, IAA protocol.

4. It was resolved that there shall be a Taskgroup website with clear mission statement, to also serve as an archive and repository for databases, e.g. Kathryn Denning's "societal impact" literature database. The website shall be hosted at ASU in the first instance, and its features cleared with Jean Michel Contant for compatibility with IAA requirements. An optional extra would be a password protected sector for Taskgroupers. It was noted that the earlier idea of a dedicated wiki had been overtaken by technology and events, but the need remains for a secure and efficient means for the Taskgroup to confer privately in the face of a media flap accompanying a putative signal.

5. The Rio and London scales were discussed, but no clear ideas for improving them were suggested. The terms of reference and possible needs for changing them were discussed; Shuch pointed out these are on the SPSG website hosted by the SETI League. There was a feeling that the emphasis should shift from reflecting on the Big Day scenario to managing the longer-term consequences of a confirmed signal or other signature of alien technology, in relation to an overall shift of world view comparable to the impact of the work of Copernicus.

6. It was decided that Active SETI is not at this stage a significant factor in the Taskgroup's deliberations. It was noted that Vakoch now chairs a separate specific Active SETI Taskgroup, placing responsibility for this outside the Post-Detection Taskgroup's immediate remit.

7. The lack of a budget for the Taskgroup was discussed, together with the possibility of a sponsor, perhaps for a workshop. One suggestion was a workshop to coincide with the 500 m radio telescope being built in China.

Meeting ended 9:30 am