



'The Ulysses legacy' press conference ESA Headquarters, Paris, 12 June 2008

Introductory joint statement by David Southwood, ESA Director of Science and Robotic Exploration, and Ed Weiler, NASA Associate Administrator of the Science Missions Directorate.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

We are here today to celebrate the successes of one of ESA and NASA's flagship missions, Ulysses – the first space probe to fly over the poles of the Sun and give us a true three-dimensional view of our star and its surroundings. Like its mythical namesake, Ulysses has had a long and exciting voyage, which after more than 17 years in space is soon coming to an end.



David Southwood,
ESA Director of Science and
Robotic Exploration

When it began in 1977, the Out-of-Ecliptic mission (as Ulysses was then called) represented the first major joint undertaking by ESA and NASA. It was also the first ESA scientific mission to have such a high percentage of non-European lead scientists, with many of the nine investigations under US responsibility. Undoubtedly, Ulysses stands out as an excellent example of international collaboration in space.

The scientific harvest has been extraordinarily rich, with many discoveries, some anticipated, and others completely unexpected. For example, the measurements made by the instruments on board Ulysses have completely changed our view of the Sun's magnetic influence on the charged particles that populate the space in which our satellites and astronauts have to operate, leading in turn to new models of how the Sun's magnetic field is carried out into space by the solar wind.

The breadth of scientific investigations made possible by Ulysses is truly amazing, extending from the study of processes occurring within the Sun itself to the properties of our local interstellar neighbourhood. Data from Ulysses have even been used to shed light on questions of fundamental cosmological importance.

A major part of this scientific success has been due to the outstanding performance of the European-built Ulysses spacecraft and its payload of internationally provided scientific instruments. Much credit should be given to the teams in industry and in ESA who designed and built such a robust space probe, as well as to the joint ESA-NASA operations team that has faced, and met, the challenges of operating a deep-space probe for more than 17 years, much longer than its 5-year planned lifetime.

Another key element in the success was the launch on board space shuttle Discovery and the highly accurate orbital injection by the upper-stage rocket, both provided by NASA.

As you will hear in the following presentations, Ulysses has given us the first detailed view of the sphere of influence of our star the Sun in not only three, but actually four dimensions – three spatial dimensions and time. This voyage of exploration has truly been an odyssey that will serve as a benchmark for space science for many years to come.



Ed Weiler,
NASA Associate
Administrator of the Science
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