EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20502

May 7, 2009

Christopher Scolese
NASA Acting Administrator
NASA Headquarters
Washington, DC 20546

Dear Chris,

The President believes strongly that space flight is important to America's economic, technological, and scientific leadership, and supports renewed human exploration to the Moon and other destinations beyond low Earth orbit. He fully understands that a strong and vibrant National Aeronautics and Space Administration can serve as a high-tech crucible for ingenuity, helping America maintain its innovative edge. And he appreciates that a robust human spaceflight program, in particular, can nourish the imagination, enrich an appreciation of our planetary home, and inspire the kind of bold achievements for which NASA and this nation have come to be known.

Given the magnitude of America's human space flight ambitions, however, and the significant investment of both funds and scientific capital that will be required to achieve the program's goals, it would be only prudent for the new Administration to review the array of challenges in the program and the options for addressing them as we move forward.

To this end, and in order for the United States to advance its goals and international leadership with regard to space exploration, I request that NASA initiate an independent review of ongoing U.S. human space flight plans and programs, as well as alternatives, to ensure that the nation is pursuing the best trajectory for the future of human space flight – one that is safe, innovative, affordable, and sustainable.

The review should aim, specifically, to identify and characterize a range of options that spans the reasonable possibilities for continuation of U.S. human space flight activities beyond retirement of the Space Shuttle. Results and supporting analysis should be provided to involved Administration agencies and offices in sufficient time to support an August 2009 decision on the way forward. The identification and characterization of options should be cognizant of – and should address the implications for – the following objectives: (1) expediting a new U.S. capability to support utilization of the International Space Station; (2) supporting missions to the Moon and other destinations beyond low Earth orbit; (3) stimulating commercial space flight capabilities; and (4) fitting within the current budget profile for NASA exploration activities.

This independent review should be led by a blue-ribbon panel of outside experts who would work closely with NASA. It should seek input from Congress, the White House the public, industry, and international partners. In addition to the objectives described above, the review should determine the appropriate amount of R&D and complementary

robotic activities needed to make human space-flight activities most productive and affordable over the long term, as well as appropriate opportunities for international collaboration. It should also evaluate what capabilities would be enabled by each of the potential architectures considered. And it should evaluate options for extending International Space Station operations beyond 2016.

While the study is ongoing, NASA should continue to work on all of its current exploration projects, including *Ares I*, *Orion*, Commercial Crew and Cargo efforts, and lunar systems.

For fifty years, NASA has thrilled and educated the world with its space exploration programs, while serving as a crucial home to scientific and technological innovation, enhancing America's leadership in Earth observation, and maintaining our national security. The results of this important review will help ensure that the agency continues to lead in these roles for decades to come.

Sincerely,

John Holdren

Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy
Assistant to the President for Science and Technology