

**9th ESA Workshop on
Advanced Space Technologies for
Robotics and Automation**

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ASTRA 2006 Workshop

WELCOME ADDRESS

H. Lutz
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to welcome you all to the 2006 edition of the ESA Workshop on Advanced Space Technologies for Robotics and Automation, ASTRA as we have always called it.

We hope that this ninth edition of ASTRA will continue the tradition of providing you, the European Space Robotics Community, with the most extensive presentation of what goes on in European Space Automation and Robotics from the programmatic and technical points of view.

It is also my hope that the conference will make possible the personal contacts and exchange of views that are so essential in making our community alive and kicking.

Since the last ASTRA not many new exciting things have happened. But we do have seen the developments, addressed two years ago, making very good progress, despite some unavoidable problems. The many programmatic and technological presentations of this Workshop will testify to this.

On the Orbital Robotics side we will see that ERA is preparing for launch in 2009, that EUROBOT is slowly progressing both as inspiring mission and as container of advanced technology. We will have the opportunity to see the plans and progress of our colleagues at DLR with their orbital robotics technologies.

We will also see what is going on with the subject of satellite servicing, a subject very dear to our community but not very successful in delivering missions.

Before talking about Planetary Robotics I would like to recall two important facts: the excellent results of the Mars Express Mission, (despite the loss of Beagle2), and the fantastic landing of Huygens on Titan. These two facts and the media interest they have generated, show that Europeans are eager to explore celestial bodies and that they can actually do it well.

With these good auspices in mind we will listen how our next endeavour in Planetary Robotics, the ExoMars project has resolved the early difficulties for starting and how it is currently proceeding.

ExoMars is potentially the most interesting ESA mission ever. Well at least for our community, as the large number of technology presentations dealing with it shows.

On Scientific Exploration of the Universe we will see what are the priorities of ESA, what future scientific missions are considered and how Automation and Robotics technologies will be essential elements for their success.

As final word on Exploration let me remind you that the USA has now committed financially itself into a return-to-the-Moon mission, and has repeatedly called for International participation.

As soon as the European contribution to the ISS will be finalised, there will be good conditions for a European participation to large international co-operation for human exploration beyond the Earth orbit.

Also in such scenarios, Automation and Robotics will play a key role in preparing, enabling, supporting, amplifying, and protecting human operations on these new frontiers.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is you who can reach these ambitious goals with your contributions as planners, researchers, technology developers, managers, and users. I wish you all the best in your efforts together with us, and I look forward to yet another stimulating and rewarding conference.

I hereby declare OPEN the ASTRA Workshop 2006.

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